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Fired VA chief: 'They saw me as an obstacle to privatization'

BY NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — David Shulkin spoke out Thursday morning, hours after being fired as secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and blamed his ouster on White House appointees who seek to dismantle the agency.



Shulkin

In a searing New York Times opinion piece, Shulkin wrote the agency, which is responsible for providing medical care to 9 million veterans, became enveloped in recent months in a "brutal power struggle."

"The advocates within the [Trump] administration for privatizing VA health services ... saw me as an obstacle to privatization who had to be removed," Shulkin wrote.

He reiterated that message later Thursday morning during an interview with NPR, when he said some political appointees at the VA thought he wasn't leading a fast enough charge toward privatization and sought to undermine him.

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■ Shulkin's dismissal follows travel scandal, political grappling

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■ Reaction to Trump's nominee for VA chief: 'We don't know this guy'

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Worried warrior

Transgender aviator, concerned that thousands like her could be affected, says her military career proves ban wrong

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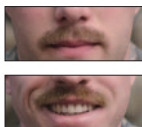
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Lindsey Muller poses for a photo Thursday near Camp Humphreys, South Korea, while holding an image from her tour to Iraq.

MARCUS FIGHTS/Stars and Stripes

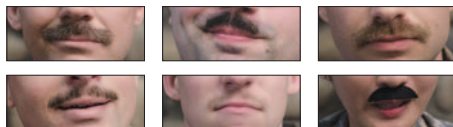
PACIFIC

Kunsan airmen's tribute to fighter pilot more than lip service

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Col. Robin Olds, September 1967



PACIFIC

Spring is in the air at Yokota Air Base in Japan

Facility will hold its Sakura Spring Festival on April 7

By LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Cherry blossom trees at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo have erupted in pinkish-white flowers, giving the base a brilliant splash of color during the first week of spring.

The blossoms — known as “sakura” in Japanese — are especially prominent on the road leading to Yokota’s east gate. That area is the site of the annual Saku-

To see video of Yokota Air Base’s cherry blossoms, visit: www.stripes.com/go/sakura



ra Spring Festival, during which Japanese citizens are invited onto the base to see the flowers. This year’s gathering is scheduled for April 7.

Yokota’s cherry trees are intertwined with the history of the base.

In the 1970s, U.S. Forces handed over many facilities in Tokyo to the Japanese government and

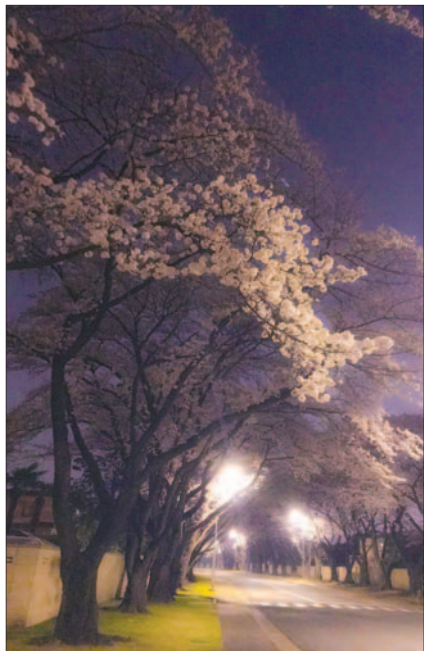
consolidated operations at Yokota. In return, Japan paid for large-scale construction and modernization at Yokota and many of the trees on the base were planted at that time.

Cherry blossoms are an important part of Japan’s cultural identity, and the practice of “hanami” — welcoming spring by enjoying the flowers’ transient beauty — has been practiced since at least the late 700s.

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PHOTOS BY LEON COOK/Stars and Stripes



Courtesy of Sayuri Kidd

Left: Blooming cherry blossom trees line a roadway Thursday at Yokota. Right: Blossoms are seen near Yokota Air Base’s library.

Street lamps light up the blossoms on the ornamental cherry trees at Yokota on Tuesday.

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MILITARY

Tanks, Apaches, artillery bombard 'enemy' in drill

BY MARTIN EGNASH

Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — It sounded like the beginning of Ragnarok. Tanks sped up to engage enemy targets while mortars and artillery lobbed rounds overhead and helicopter gunships launched missiles during a high-speed, live-fire exercise.

More than a dozen M1A2 Abrams tanks and M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles from the 1st Infantry Division's 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team joined

'It was amazing. I've never been that close to tanks firing before. I'm really proud of how my team performed today.'

Spc. Seva Eagle, a combat engineer participating in Combined Resolve 10

forces Wednesday with several AH-64 Apache helicopters from the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade and conducted the combined-arms exercise, to prepare them for Combined Resolve 10, a major multinational drill next month. The exercise gave many of

the troops on rotation to Europe from Fort Riley, Kan., the opportunity to work closely with soldiers from different jobs.

"It was amazing. I've never been that close to tanks firing before," said Spc. Seva Eagle, a combat engineer who helped clear obstacles during the exercise. "I'm really proud of how my team performed today."

Combined Resolve 10 is set to begin April 9, when more than 3,700 soldiers from 13 nations will conduct massive war games in Germany.

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PHOTOS BY MARTIN EGNASH/Stars and Stripes

An M1A2 Abrams tank fires during a live-fire exercise at Grafenwoehr, Germany, on Wednesday.



Soldiers with the 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team in a Bradley Fighting Vehicle take part in the live-fire exercise at Grafenwoehr.



M1A2 Abrams tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles converge on a smoke signal Wednesday during the exercise at Grafenwoehr Training Area. Watch video from the exercise at www.stripes.com/go/combinedarms



The view from the gunner's turret of an unarmored Humvee looks out over Grafenwoehr Training Area as M1A2 Abrams tanks, M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and 64 Apache helicopters take part in a combined-arms exercise in preparation for Combined Resolve 10.



M1A2 Abrams tanks and an AH-64 Apache helicopter are ready to attack the enemy position.

MILITARY

Transgender ban could cost soldier her job

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

PYEONGTAEK, South Korea — Just nine months ago, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Lindsey Muller was feted as a guest speaker at an Army-sponsored LGBT pride observance at Camp Humphreys.

Now she's worried she may lose her job after nearly two decades of honorable service because of a new push to ban most transgender troops from serving in the military.

Muller, a 36-year-old transgender aviator, is two months shy of beginning the lengthy process of retiring after what will have been 18 years of service. Even if she retires before the status of transgender servicemembers is finally resolved, thousands of others could be affected.

"I think they've proven their mettle in combat; they've proven their mettle in peacetime. They're there for their peers when they need them, and I think to dismiss them would be a huge disservice," she told Stars and Stripes in an interview Thursday.

President Donald Trump issued an order last week banning most transgender troops from serving in the U.S. military except under "limited circumstances."

The decision follows his surprise declaration last year that he intended to reverse his predecessor Barack Obama's plan to allow transgender individuals to serve openly.

The Trump order has been mired in legal challenges and four federal courts ruled against it, prompting the Pentagon to allow those serving to remain and other transgender people to enlist beginning Jan. 1 until litigation runs its course.

The new directive rolls back the blanket ban announced by Trump on Twitter last year, but opponents said the changes didn't make it any less discriminatory.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, a former Marine general, said in a memorandum cited by Trump that having transgender people in the military posed "substantial risks" to readiness and unit cohesion.

Muller, who enlisted as a male at 17 and served with the 101st Airborne Division when it rolled into Iraq in 2003, said she is living proof that's not the case.

Serving by example

Pfc. Ryan Muller graduated with honors from his infantry class at Fort Benning, Ga.

He went on to earn an Expert Infantry Badge and a Combat Infantry Badge along with numerous other commendations and rave evaluations, which have been carefully cataloged in two binders.

Muller began pursuing flight school in 2007 and went on to become an Apache pilot.

Lindsey, who has legally changed her name and began openly identifying as a woman in 2016, is currently an aviation



PHOTOS BY MARCUS FICHTL/Stars and Stripes

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Lindsey Muller shows old war photos from her tour to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom I, near Camp Humphreys, South Korea, on Thursday.

‘I think [transgender servicemembers have] proven their mettle in combat; they’ve proven their mettle in peacetime. ... I think to dismiss them would be a huge disservice.’

Chief Warrant Officer 3
Lindsey Muller
a transgender soldier



A command photo of Chief Warrant Officer 3 Lindsey Muller from last year is seen next to a photo of her from 2011.

safety officer based at Camp Humphreys.

She said she was prepared to resign when she decided to begin the process of transitioning, but her superiors talked her out of leaving.

"At each echelon I was asked to stay based on performance," she said during the interview in her off-base townhouse. "That's been a recurring theme. I put myself at the mercy of my peers and my commanders ... and they've said either we'll figure this out together, or it's not an issue."

Muller, who is originally from Poplar Bluff, Mo., saw the military as a way to escape small-town life and see the world. She said she wasn't even aware of transgender individuals until a few years into service when a friend took her to a drag show.

She was inspired to transition by former Navy SEAL Kristin Beck, who came out as a transgender woman in 2013.

At first Muller kept a low profile and stopped wearing her male-only combat badges on her

uniform because they attracted too many stares and questions.

But she said her identity was eating away at her, so she put the awards back on and made a "coming-out video" when she turned 30 and shared it slowly.

While most people have been supportive, she has encountered discrimination, including some co-workers who have told her they don't want her around their families.

"I've had people tell me I should do the Army a favor and commit suicide. My wife and I have both had death threats, threats of assault," she said.

Muller has no regrets and says joining the Army was the best decision of her life.

"The military is the reason I am where I am today, hands down," she said. "It's the reason that I can afford to pay for certain trips, vacations and see the world. It's the reason that my family lives so comfortably."

Having spent more than half her life in uniform, she feels obli-

gated to speak out against the ban on behalf of the thousands of other transgender servicemembers and those seeking to sign up.

"The only way to combat something like this is to face the prejudice head-on, and I can't do that by being silent," she said, adding that her career "proves that a lot of those reservations are not justified."

"If I don't, and I just take my retirement papers, and I just fade off into the distance, what about those thousands of other troopers?" she said. "It essentially feels like jumping on a grenade for those guys."

Legal challenges

Muller is a plaintiff in one of the legal challenges brought by civil rights organizations.

The issue was complicated after Trump said Friday that he was rescinding his previous decision after a Pentagon review and would allow transgender troops to serve in limited cases instead of barring them outright.

The Justice Department immediately asked the federal judges who temporarily blocked the ban last year to dissolve their old orders as moot.

U.S. District Court Judge Marsha Peckham hinted she had little interest in doing so and suggested during a hearing in Seattle on Tuesday that the ban could be struck down permanently, according to The Associated Press.

Peckham requested further briefs within a week about how the president's new policy might affect the case. She also insisted that both sides limit their arguments to the broader initial ban.

Natalie Nardecchia, an attorney with the plaintiffs' representative Lambda Legal, argued that the government's new policy is irrelevant.

"When the government discriminates against a group of people, they have to have a reason; they can't say, we'll go study it and come up with a reason," Nardecchia said at a press conference after the hearing. "Making slight changes in the policy in its final version does not render it constitutional."

Mattis, meanwhile, has declined to answer questions on the new policy, citing the ongoing litigation.

"I'm not going to discuss transgender. I've already said that two times now," he told reporters Tuesday at the Pentagon. "Anything I say ... could jeopardize the purity of what they do."

In his 48-page memo to the president, Mattis said allowing military personnel who seek to undertake a treatment to change their gender or who question their gender identity poses "substantial risks."

He also said that exempting servicemembers from "well-established mental health, physical health and sex-based standards" could hurt "military effectiveness and lethality."

The policy includes narrow exemptions allowing some transgender members to serve.

The Pentagon has not said how many transgender people are serving, but a Rand Corp. study estimated between 1,320 and 6,630 out of 1.3 million active-duty troops are transgender.

Muller, who said she paid for most of her gender reassignment surgery out of pocket, said she wished she could sit down with Mattis and share her perspective that transgender troops who fight to serve should be honored, not dismissed.

She already feared the writing was on the wall when she stood at the podium June 29 for the ceremony honoring the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community at Camp Humphreys.

"I made a comment during the speech that this was my first LGBT pride event as an openly serving member of the military, and I don't know if it'll be my last," she said. "We just don't know."

Stars and Stripes reporter Marcus Fichtl contributed to this report.
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MILITARY

Suspect arrested in death of airman on Guam

By **WYATT OLSON**
Stars and Stripes

One person is in custody in connection with the apparent stabbing death of an airman at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

The Air Force identified the deceased as Airman 1st Class Bradley Hale, 20, who was deployed from Barksdale Air Force Base, La.

He was found unresponsive early Tues-

day at a temporary lodging facility on the base and was declared dead at 3 a.m., an Air Force statement said.

"A subject is in custody, and the cause of death is currently under investigation," the statement added.

First responders "saw a lot of blood at the scene and what appeared to be a stab wound on the victim," Linda Card, director of public affairs at the Air Force Office of Special Investigations in Washington,

told The Guam Daily Post.

The newspaper reported Wednesday that a medical examiner from the Office of Armed Forces Medical Examiner at Kadena Air Base, Japan, was expected to conduct an autopsy Friday at Naval Base Guam.

Dr. Aurelio Espinola, chief medical examiner, told the Post that Hale "had sustained stab wounds." However, he had not yet seen the body.

The Air Force did not disclose any further information about the person in custody or the circumstances of the death.

"Our focus is on supporting the families, the affected unit, and our community," Brig. Gen. Douglas Cox, 36th Wing commander, said in a statement. "This is a very difficult loss."

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Phillip Norman



Adam Clapp



John Jarzabek



John Roberts



Justin Shetter



Steffan Sullivan



Joe Demarzo



Chad Miles

Sila Pang

Airmen's mustaches honor famed fighter pilot Robin Olds

By **MARCUS FICHTL**
Stars and Stripes

KUNSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — Some airmen in South Korea are celebrating a famed former 8th Fighter Wing commander the way they do every March — by growing Robin Olds mustaches.

"It just grows on you," said 8th Mission Support Squadron deputy commander Lt. Col. John Roberts before posing for a photo with his mustache Tuesday. He was standing in the Robin Olds room inside a bar just off Olds Avenue.

"I feel that I could probably take on the whole North Korean army myself right now," said Roberts, 43, from Los Angeles. "You

are bulletproof once you grow a mustache — that's straight from Robin Olds."

A triple fighter ace, Olds scored his first dozen kills in the skies over Europe flying the P-38 Lightning and the P-51 Mustang during World War II. He was stateside during the Korean War but took command of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing in 1967, when its jets were being hammered by enemy MiG-21s during the Vietnam War.

Olds' solution was Operation Bolo, in which he disguised his F-4 Phantoms as bombers and lured the Vietnamese fighters into a trap. Bolo netted the wing seven kills and the initiative in the skies.

By the end of his tour, Olds had shot down four enemy jets and had grown his distinctive, handlebar mustache as an act of rebellion against the Air Force brass.

"It became the middle finger I couldn't raise in the [public relations] photographs," Olds once said. "The mustache became my silent, last word in the verbal battles ... with higher headquarters on rules, targets and fighting the war."

Olds' cockiness and "we're the best" attitude linger over the 8th Fighter Wing, which came to Kunsan in 1974. Wolfpack airmen's love of mustaches and pushing the envelope aren't acts of defiance but rather a swagger, kicking up the base's metaphori-

cal guitar amp from 10 to 11.

"Nobody drills, nobody trains like Kunsan," Roberts said. "Our main point here is to be ready to take the fight north to good ol' Kim Jong Un."

Kunsan is a time capsule of what the service used to be. People get to know each other here by playing sports or mingling in packed squadron bars after work.

"This is how the Air Force was, I think, 20 to 30 years ago," Roberts said. "It hasn't changed here, that culture."

It's the sort of place where Olds would be at home, he said.

"If he was here, [he would probably be] out on the flight line,

hanging out with the enlisted crew," Roberts said. "He'd be everywhere and anywhere but the Olds room — until it was Friday night, to throw back some beers."

The first rule to growing out that signature Robin Olds "bulletproof" mustache?

"No. 1, don't ever, ever trim it," Roberts said.

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Vietnam vets honored at AAFES locations around the world

By **MARTIN EGNASH**
Stars and stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Vietnam veterans were honored at Army and Air Force Exchange Service locations around the world Thursday in celebration of National Vietnam War Veterans Day.

At U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria, more than a dozen veterans were awarded pins and served cake at the front of the post exchange.

"We invited Vietnam veterans from around the area to come in and be recognized on behalf of a grateful nation," said Carrie Cammel, the general manager of the USAG Bavaria exchanges.

This National Vietnam War Veterans Day marks the anniversary of the end of the conflict. Many of the troops who fought there returned home to a nation that largely did not appreciate

More Stars and Stripes coverage looking back on Vietnam at 50
[stripes.com/go/vietnam50](https://www.stripes.com/go/vietnam50)



their service.

"I think this is a great way to celebrate the Vietnam-era veterans, who did not get a good welcome home 50 years ago, when they came home," said James Federline.

"It feels good to be here, and to be recognized for what we went through," said Vietnam veteran Don Cannon. "I think AAFES does have a very outstanding job in supporting us."

The 58,200 servicemembers who lost their lives or are still missing in action from that conflict also are being remembered, said the garrison's command sergeant major, Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Sutterfield.

Although estimates of total ca-



MARTIN EGNASH/Stars and Stripes

Carrie Cammel, the general manager of the USAG Bavaria exchanges, fastens a lapel pin onto Ken Vlasak, the commander of VFW Post 10692, on Thursday as he and other Vietnam veterans participate in the National Vietnam Veterans Day celebration at Grafenwoehr, Germany.

sualties vary widely, at least 1.5 million people — most of them civilians — died in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos between 1955 and 1975.

"It's important that we don't forget their sacrifices. Today's veterans owe them for their ser-

vice, and we are reaping the benefits of their hard work," Sutterfield said.

"They went through a lot for us. And they honor us with their presence here."

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VETERANS

Shulkin dismissal follows recent turmoil

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Wednesday fired David Shulkin as secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs and nominated White House physician Rear Adm. Ronny L. Jackson to replace him.

After weeks of speculation that Shulkin would lose his job, Trump finally announced his decision to dismiss him through a tweet.

"I am thankful for Dr. David Shulkin's service to our country and to our GREAT VETERANS!" Trump's tweet concluded.

Shulkin's tenure as VA chief seemed precarious following revelations of his questionable spending on a summer trip to Europe with his wife. The travel scandal and increased political grappling with White House insiders at the VA about the agency's direction ultimately led to Trump's disfavor with him.

If Jackson is confirmed by the Senate as VA secretary, he will be responsible for the second largest federal agency, with more than 350,000 employees. It operates on a nearly \$200 billion budget and includes a health care system serving 9 million veterans nationwide.

Jackson, 50, was selected as White House physician in 2006 while he was still serving in Iraq as an emergency doctor. He served as a physician for former presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Jackson appeared before the White House press corps earlier this year, when he reported he examined Trump and found the president to be in "excellent health."

In the interim, Trump announced Robert Wilkie would serve as the acting VA secretary. Wilkie, recently named as the Defense Department as undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

White House shake-up

Shulkin's firing is part of a broader shake-up at the White House. It follows Trump's abrupt dismissal of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson this month and comes just days after H.R. McMaster resigned as national security adviser.

Though Shulkin's pending dismissal had been apparent for weeks, the White House as recently as Monday insisted he had Trump's confidence.

Shulkin's ouster and Jackson's appointment prompt questions of whether reform efforts underway at the VA will continue.

The agency is in the middle of contract negotiations for a new, multibillion-dollar project to replace its electronic health record, and it's implementing changes to its education benefits and claims appeals process. Shulkin also was working with Congress to develop and approve measures to overhaul the VA's community care programs — one of Trump's key campaign promises for veterans.

Shulkin, 58, was first appointed to the VA by Obama in 2015, when he was assigned to lead the agency's vast health care system as an undersecretary. He's a physician and previously held executive positions at hospitals in New Jersey and New York.

For one year, Shulkin enjoyed bipartisan support that was rare among Trump's Cabinet members. He was unanimously confirmed by the Senate and shepherded major VA reform legislation through Congress, including one bill — often praised by Trump — to increase accountability among VA employees.

Trump even joked in June about the improbability of firing Shulkin.

"I also want to express our appreciation for Secretary Shulkin, who is implementing dramatic reform throughout the VA,"



Above: Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin appears for a House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on March 15. Shulkin has been fired by President Donald Trump, and will be temporarily replaced by acting secretary Robert Wilkie, right, pending approval of his permanent successor.

CARLOS BORGANO/Stars and Stripes

Trump said during a bill-signing ceremony. "I have no doubt it will be properly implemented. Right David? It better be, David, or..." Trump then pointed at Shulkin and mouthed to the crowd, "You're fired," his catchphrase on his reality television show "The Apprentice."

"Oh, we'll never have to use those words on our David," Trump said, as Shulkin laughed. "We will never use those words on you, that's for sure."

Increasing uncertainty

During the past week, Shulkin's removal appeared inevitable.

Chris Ruddy, Newsmax CEO and Trump confidant, said Sunday on ABC's "This Week" that he spoke with Trump over the weekend at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Fla., and the president was expecting to make "one or two major changes" to his administration. The Associated Press — citing three anonymous administration officials — reported he was planning to oust Shulkin.

On Monday, Darin Selnick — a White House adviser and former adviser to Concerned Veterans for America — left the Domestic Policy Council and returned to the VA, where he had previously been assigned. He announced the change in an email obtained by Stars and Stripes.

Politico reported in February that Selnick was forced out of the VA in mid-2017 after he and Shulkin butted heads on policy decisions. Long-standing veterans organizations in Washington have been weary of CVA's role in the administration.

CVA, part of the Koch brothers' political network, has pushed for an aggressive expansion of veterans' health care into the private sector. Shulkin has repeatedly promised to lawmakers that he would not privatize the VA, and he's pushed for a more moderate approach to using private-sector care.

Selnick's transition back to the VA was interpreted by some veteran advocates as an ominous sign for the VA secretary. On Twitter, Paul Kieckheoff, founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans for America, wrote, "No matter how they spin this, it's bad news for Shulkin."

Violations lead to chaos

VA Inspector General Michael Missal released findings Feb. 14 that Shulkin violated ethical standards on an official trip that he and his wife took to Denmark and London during summer. Shulkin improperly accepted tickets to a Wimbledon tennis match and spent much of the trip on sightseeing activities, the IG found.

Shulkin asked his team of lawyers first fought the allegations, but Shulkin later said he'd comply with the IG's recommendations. He said he paid back the \$4,132 of taxpayer money spent on his wife's travel expenses.

Days after the report, Shulkin's chief of staff, Vivica Wright Simpson, retired. One of the IG's findings was that Wright Simpson altered an email to an ethics official to mislead her into approving travel expenses for Shulkin's wife. The IG, believing the actions might have violated criminal statutes, forwarded the findings to the Justice Department, which declined to prosecute.

Peter O'Rourke, a former member of Trump's transition team, took Wright Simpson's place.

During the fallout from the report, Shulkin told reporters that political appointees assigned to the VA had a different agenda than his and were attempting to oust him. But in the following weeks, Shulkin appeared unable to remove them from the agency.

In an email, Jake Leinenkugel, a White House adviser to Trump inside the VA, expressed frustration with and distrust of Shulkin. He outlined the possibility of removing some of Shulkin's top staff and eventually Shulkin himself.

John Ulyot, who leads the VA's public affairs staff, asked a congressional staff member to persuade lawmakers to ask for Shulkin's dismissal, USA Today reported.

In an evident split with his communications team, Shulkin responded to reporters individually to talk about the turmoil rolling the VA's central office.

Hints of strife

The revelation of a rift between Shulkin and White House insiders wasn't a shock to some people involved with major veter-

ans organizations in Washington, who saw hints of internal strife during the past few months.

In December, senators received mixed messages from the administration about proposed reforms to the VA Choice program, which allows veterans to receive private-sector medical care. Shulkin has been working with senators on legislation that has bipartisan support, but some White House officials favored a Republican-led bill that provides more aggressive expansion. The issue has been at the core of controversies splitting Shulkin and some White House insiders.

The VA again made national headlines March 7, when the IG released another report about the Washington DC VA Medical Center, where investigators found a culture of complacency allowed widespread failures to persist for years, putting veterans at risk and weakening core functions of the hospital.

That was followed by multiple news reports of an ongoing government audit of Shulkin's alleged use of his security detail to cover personal errands. Findings of the audit had not been released as of Thursday.

Attempts to lay low

Through it all, Shulkin appeared at news conferences and congressional hearings, attempting to brush off the latest controversies — referring to them as "distractions." At nearly every turn, he said he had Trump's confidence.

"I came here for one reason — to improve the lives of veterans, and that's what I'm doing," Shulkin said in mid-March at a VA event, where he invited Capitol Hill. "I made it clear to everybody in my department I have no tolerance for anything other than the business we have to do for the VA."

Soon after the Feb. 14 report, major veterans organizations publicly rallied behind Shulkin. The groups, which regularly advise the VA, Congress and White House on veterans issues, decry any attempts to undermine or replace him. They feared a replacement would push more veterans' medical care into the private sector, leading to the dismantling of VA services.

Leaders on VA oversight in Congress — Democrats and Republicans — also defended and supported Shulkin on numerous occasions since mid-February. Through the turmoil of the last few weeks, only two lawmakers called for his resignation or dismissal.


But for more than a month, it was unclear whether Shulkin had his boss's support.

Rumors of Shulkin's firing escalated in mid-March, when Tillerson's firing — also by tweet — triggered multiple news reports about who was Trump's next target. Shulkin's name quickly rose to the top of the list, with news reports speculating on potential replacements such as Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Fox News contributor Pete Hegseth and former Rep. Jeff Miller.


Also Monday, Raj Shah, the White House principal deputy press secretary, responded to questions about Shulkin's pending dismissal only by stating he had no personal announcements to make at the time. When asked about the relationship between Shulkin and Trump, Shah said, "I haven't asked the president about it today so I don't want to comment on it too specifically."

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MILITARY

At Ramstein, construction starts on new high school

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Construction on the biggest and most expensive U.S. military school in Germany is under way here.

While a steady rain fell outside, Ramstein High School students, teachers and U.S. and German officials with a stake in the project marked the occasion indoors at a ground-breaking ceremony Wednesday for the new Ramstein High.

"We're at the beginning of an exciting continuation of our march into the future," said Ramstein Superintendent O'Donnell. "The benefits for our students will be unlimited."

Those benefits will be reaped by a future generation of students.

The new high school is scheduled to open in the fall of 2021, which means this year's eighth graders will be the first class to attend and graduate from the new school.

It is being built adjacent to the current school campus. Much of the earth where the foundation will go has already been dug up. Students will continue to use the old building until it's torn down during the last phase of construction. Officials said the goal is as little disruption as possible to students and teachers.

With a budget of \$98.8 million and a capacity for 1,100 students, the new Ramstein High will be the largest Department of Defense Education Activity school in Germany, said Michael Voich, a program manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District.

The Corps is partnering with the DODEA and the German government construction management agency Landesbetrieb LBB, which has the lead on the school design and construction.

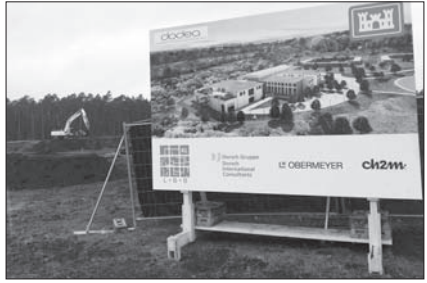
The three-story school conforms to 21st-century design principles. Instead of classrooms, the school features "learning neighborhoods" that can be adjusted

for different group sizes and purposes. The school will also include a computing center, music rooms, an art room with kiln, science labs and career technical education and shared common spaces.

Existing athletic facilities will be revamped and expanded. The track and football field will be torn up and redone; the track will expand from six to eight lanes. A new softball field and baseball field will go where the old school is. New tennis and basketball facilities will also be added, Voich said.

Ramstein High is one of 19 DODEA school projects either in the design stage or under construction in Germany, with a combined budget of more than \$1 billion, Voich said. Most are in the Kaiserslautern and Spangdahlem military communities. Set to open this fall are the new Kaiserslautern High School and Wiesbaden Middle School.

The DODEA is replacing or upgrading a majority of its schools worldwide after decades of ne-



JENNIFER H. SVAN/Stars and Stripes

An architectural rendering of the new Ramstein High School in Germany is displayed Wednesday as construction crews dig where the DODEA's largest school in the country will be built.

glect and deferred maintenance.

A report the DODEA submitted to Congress in 2008 on the condition of its schools triggered the current boom in school construction. In many communities, the DODEA determined it would be more cost-effective to build a new school than to repair old buildings.

While leaving school Wednesday, Ramstein sophomore Sam Williams said the current school was functional but he's noticed "the walls are kind of crusty."

"Not like black mold, just a little bit; it's not bad," he said. "It's re-

ally nice to get a new school."

But senior Cedee Oswald said she was sad to see the current school go away.

"I've been in this high school since freshman year," she said. "This is all home, so to see it being torn down, is kind of upsetting to me."

But based on the drawing of the new school, posted at the construction site, "it looks like it's going to be pretty cool," she said.

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US-led exercise boosts policing of African seas

By SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

A U.S.-led naval exercise that brought together 31 countries to strengthen efforts to combat piracy, drug smugglers and human traffickers ended Thursday in West Africa.

The eight-day Obangame Express in the Gulf of Guinea aimed to close gaps in policing West African waters by improving communication and teamwork between countries. The navies worked together during simulations to spot, raid and search suspicious ships.

"Our joint presence during this important exercise sends a powerful message throughout the region," Capt. G. Robert Aguilar, commander of the USS Mount Whitney, said in a statement. "The U.S. and West African nations will work together to protect important trade and shipping routes in the Gulf of Guinea."

The exercise gave the Mount Whitney, the 6th Fleet's command ship, a chance to use its new computerized communications and intelligence gathering system \$45 million overhaul. The ship's officers helped coordinate communications among the many participants. The Mount Whitney has 300 crewmembers — half sailors, half civilians — and can transmit large amounts of secure data at any point on Earth.

Obangame is hosted by U.S. Africa Command and is the largest of three yearly maritime-policing exercises. The other two are Cutlass Express in East Africa and Phoenix Express in the Mediterranean.

African governments and U.S. authorities created joint exercises in 2010 — when maritime crimes in the region had reached record levels — to improve African countries' ability to protect their seas.

Boosting cooperative policing to thwart crimes such as illegal fishing, which don't directly threaten U.S. national security, can also deter crimes that affect American interests, such as piracy, said Christopher Jaspardo, U.S. national security affairs profes-



KEYSTINA COFFEY/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Petty Officer 2nd Class Tyler Skinner eyes terrain near Liberia from a Sea Hawk helicopter assigned to the "Ghost Riders" unit Saturday during Obangame Express.

The exercise gave the USS Mount Whitney, the 6th Fleet's command ship, a chance to use its new computerized communications systems.



THEON J. GODOLO/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

A Ghanaian team conducts a boat, search and seizure drill Monday.

sor at the Naval War College.

"Illegal fishing can help spur piracy, and fishing vessels may employ forced labor or traffic drugs," Jaspardo said. "Preventing crime at one end of the spectrum can help prevent it more generally."

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Ore. base sees flights return

By WILLIAM HOWARD
Stars and Stripes

Thirty F-15C Eagles from the Air National Guard's Oregon-based 173rd Fighter Wing are scheduled to resume flight operations Thursday since being grounded over pilot safety concerns last week.

"Due to a possible maintenance issue, out of an abundance of caution and concern for air crew safety, we have decided to stand down our flying while we take a closer look and determine the path forward," said Maj. Nikki Jackson, a spokeswoman for the unit.

The temporary grounding to investigate structural issues didn't affect training or deployment schedules and has not led to a servicewide inspection of the aging fighter jets.

The Oregon training base houses the only F-15C training schoolhouse in the Air Force for both active-duty and Guard pilots. Last March, Air Force officials announced plans to retire 212 F-15C and 24 F-15D models by fiscal year 2020.

"The F-15C [has] served our nation well, as have its pilots for decades. And it was our air superiority fighter; now F-22 has taken that role," said Maj. Gen. Scott D. West, director of current operations and deputy chief of staff for operations for the service at the Pentagon.

The single-seat F-15C and two-seat F-15D models entered the inventory in 1979 and have deployed to nearly every theater throughout the world, according to the Air Force. Since 1976, Israel, Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Singapore have also operated the aircraft.

Active-duty squadrons of the fighter jets are stationed overseas at RAF Lakenheath, England; Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany; and Kadana Air Base, Japan.

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MILITARY

Commission aims to keep WWI soldiers' memories alive

By MICHAEL S. DARNELL
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — There are no soldiers alive who can recall the sound an M1903 Springfield rifle makes as it spits lead across a muddied battlefield.

Likewise, there are no mothers left to cry over sons who died in the trenches in Verdun, France, or in the icy waters off Denmark's Jutland.

The generation that, for a time, believed it was fighting the "War to End All Wars," has long since passed on. Their tombstones, memorials and artifacts are scattered across the world — solemn reminders that victory is fleeting.

A dozen historians, educators, artisans and military veterans — the World War I Centennial Commission — is doing its part to ensure that their sacrifices won't be forgotten.

Members of the commission and other experts spoke Thursday at the National Press Club about the enduring impact of the war and the parallels between it and the modern political landscape.

"The rapid change in information technology [was] a problem in 1914, as it is today; the beliefs and actions of nonstate actors is a problem; terrorism; finance as a coercive tool," said panelist Michael Neilberg, chairman of war studies at the United States Army War College. Those similarities make education on past conflicts so vital to modern diplomacy.

"There are also ways, I hope, that if we understand what happened 100 years ago, you can at least see the warning signs coming," he said.

The lessons of historic warfare aren't lost on the modern military.

"There are many, many lessons to be learned from World War I," Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark

Milley said during November's groundbreaking for what could become the National World War I Memorial in Washington. "But if there is one lesson most of all to learn (it) is the lesson to vow to never let it happen again."

That, said commission member Matthew Naylor, is why memorials — like the one proposed for Pershing Park in Washington — and museums are so important.

"We must remember those whose lives were lost," Naylor said at Thursday's roundtable. "We must also remember their courage and valor ... it informs us."

Naylor is also the president and CEO of the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Mo. That museum was an expansion of the Liberty Memorial — one of the earliest monuments to World War I in the U.S., built just a few years after the armistice was signed Nov. 11, 1918.

The museum's job is to continue to inform the public, long after this year's 100th anniversary of the end of the war has passed, about the atrocities and the benevolence born of the Great War.

"We continue to learn from that because we continue to live in war's shadow," Naylor said during an interview with Stars and Stripes on Wednesday. "We aren't free of conflict, we aren't in this just and lasting peace. Period."

Naylor said the words on the Great Frieze remain the driving force for efforts to keep memories of World War I alive:

"These have dared bear the torches of sacrifice and service. Their bodies return to dust but their work liveth evermore. Let us strive on to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

A tank ploughs its way through a trench and heads toward the German line near Saint Michel, France.



MICHAEL S. DARNELL/Stars and Stripes

Michael Neilberg, author and chairman of War Studies at the U.S. Army War College, fields a question during a question-and-answer session on World War I held in Washington on Thursday.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Three British soldiers take cover in a trench as they come under fire in August 1916 during World War I.



JOE GRONELSKY/Stars and Stripes

Matthew C. Naylor, president and CEO of the National World War I Museum and Memorial, spoke Thursday about the importance of remembering the lives lost during World War I.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

A man prepares to start a U.S. Army airplane in April 1917, probably at Selfridge Field, a U.S. Air Service training camp created in Michigan after the U.S. entered World War I.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Allied soldiers, one with a bandaged head, sit on the ground.

WAR ON TERRORISM



B.K. BANGASH/AP

Pakistani militant leader Fazlur Rehman Khali, center, greets visitors at his compound in Islamabad, Pakistan, on March 22.

Militant leader, ex-bin Laden ally rams freely in Pakistan

By KATHY GANNON
Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — He is crisscrossing Pakistan championing a fatwa, or Islamic religious decree, forbidding militant violence inside the country. But the mere fact that Fazlur Rehman Khali, veteran leader of an organization designated as a terrorist group by the U.S., is free has experts questioning Pakistan's willingness to fight extremism.

Khali, once a close friend of the late al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden, co-founded Harakat-ul-Mujahideen, a group accused by India of attacking its forces in the Kashmir region and by the U.S. of training militants and carrying out attacks in Afghanistan. The group has undergone several name changes over time and is now known as Ansar-ul-Ummah.

But authorities have left him alone. At his home on the outskirts of the capital, Islamabad, the gates are protected by a burly, bushy bearded guard whose automatic rifle is always at his side. Khali's madrasa, or religious school, named for Khalid bin Al-Waleed, one of the most prominent early Muslim commanders leading the conquest of Iraq and Syria in the 7th century, occupies a sprawling compound next door in the middle of a crowded market.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Khali denied the accusations against his group and he applauded the fatwa, which he joined other Sunni and Shiite religious scholars in writing, denouncing militant violence in Pakistan as against Islam. The fatwa, issued in January, is the first such decree issued by such a broad range of scholars in Pakistan.

"Terrorism, suicide attacks, blasts and killing of innocent people are forbidden in Pakistan, in accordance with Sharia (Islamic law)," said Khali, 55, dressed in a starched white traditional shal-

war kameez and looking relaxed on the manicured, lush, green lawn of his compound.

"Religious scholars belonging to different schools of thought are unanimous on the issue and are against terrorism."

Afghanistan has criticized the fatwa because it is specific to Pakistan. Khali said Afghan President Ashraf Ghani should call Islamic scholars in his country together to issue a fatwa of their own. He offered to go to Kabul to help craft the fatwa.

"If Ghani does this, we will support his initiative. We wish he would do it. If Afghans sit with us, we will support them," he said.

Since the beginning of the year, Pakistan has come under relentless pressure from the U.S. to crack down on militants, particularly the Haqqani network, it says have found safe havens in Pakistan. While Islamabad denies organized havens, it says insurgents move around among the 1.5 million Afghan refugees still living in Pakistan.

President Donald Trump, in a blistering New Year's Day tweet, accused Pakistan of "lies and deceit" and later suspended hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid.

Khali's stature in the militant hierarchy has waned since the late 1990s, when he signed on to bin Laden's fatwa ordering the faithful to attack U.S. interests wherever they found them.

Still, his organization's publications are used to raise money and have exhorted the faithful to fight in Afghanistan, where the Afghan National Army, backed by the U.S.-led coalition, is struggling against a resurgent Taliban.

That sort of fundraising has contributed to the likelihood that Pakistan will be placed on a so-called "gray list" of countries doing too little to stop terrorism when the Financial Action Task Force, an intergovernment group

trying to stem terrorism financing, meets in June.

The U.S. State Department in 2014 said Khali's group still runs training camps in eastern Afghanistan. In 2016, Indian security forces said they arrested five Harakat members on its side of the disputed Kashmir region, allegedly planning attacks on Indian dignitaries.

"This is someone who had close and direct ties to Osama Bin Laden and is very plugged in to the militant networks of South Asia," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the U.S.-based Wilson Center. "Even if he's not making much noise, he shouldn't be taken lightly."

Khali dismissed U.S. criticism of Pakistan for allowing militant leaders to roam free.

"Whether America likes it or doesn't like it makes no difference to me. I am Pakistani. We have courts. We are not U.S. slaves," he said.

Analysts say Pakistan's policy of allowing militants their freedom is mostly motivated by its concerns about India, against whom it has fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir.

Pakistan also repeatedly reminds the U.S. and its critics that it has lost thousands of soldiers — more than the U.S. and NATO combined in Afghanistan — fighting militants on its territory. It says U.S. criticism is unfair and an attempt to put its own failures in Afghanistan on the shoulders of Pakistan.

"Pakistan has certainly taken aggressive action against some militant groups" said Seth Jones, director of the Transnational Threats Project at the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

But its intelligence agencies "continue to use some militants as a tool of foreign policy in countries like Afghanistan and India."

Envoy rejects US claim that Russia is arming Taliban

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
Associated Press

MOSCOW — The Taliban and Moscow had a good laugh together while discussing Washington's claims that Russia has been arming the extremist movement, Russia's envoy for Afghanistan said Thursday.

Envoy Zamir Kabulov said representatives of Russia and the Taliban scoffed at the allegations during their conversations, with the Taliban saying they illegally buy all the weapons they need from the Afghan government and police and just need money for that. He added that Russian negotiators jokingly said, "Sorry, we have no money."

Kabulov said at a briefing in Moscow that Russia's contacts with the Taliban aim to ensure the safety of Russian citizens in Afghanistan and to encourage the Taliban to join peace talks.

"We established the contacts a few years ago when we became seriously worried about possible threat threats for the Russian mission and Russian citizens in Afghanistan," he said. "It was important for us to clarify the Taliban's plans regarding our citizens, and we received assurances that they have no hostile intentions toward Russians."

As the dialogue went on, Kabulov added, Russia talked about the need to end the war through political means. He emphasized that it's impossible to achieve peace without engaging the Taliban, voicing hope they could join a new round of negotiations hosted by Russia.

"It's the only way to end the war in Afghanistan," Kabulov said.

He noted that some in the Taliban leadership may favor talks, but so far they have remained in minority.

"The Taliban isn't a monolithic organization," he said. "The high-level and mid-level field commanders believe that any attempt to hold talks with what they

describe as a puppet government would mark a betrayal of their ideas and undermine their authority. They are searching for a compromise that would be acceptable to the majority."

He noted that a conference on Afghanistan hosted by the ex-Soviet nation of Uzbekistan this week marked some progress, with its final declaration expressing support for the Afghan government's offer of direct talks with the Taliban. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who attended the conference in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, has indicated the Taliban could become a political party.

Kabulov also emphasized the key role Pakistan and Iran play in the Afghan peace efforts and warned the U.S. against trying to sideline Islamabad.

"We realize that Pakistan and Iran, not Russia or the U.S., are the two key players in the Afghan settlement," he said. "We are trying to develop a dialogue with Pakistan and jointly search for solutions."

Kabulov said the U.S. claims that Russia was arming the Taliban reflected an attempt to shift blame for what he described as the U.S. failure in Afghanistan.

Russian President Vladimir Putin supported Washington's action in Afghanistan following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001 and welcomed the deployment of the U.S. military to ex-Soviet Central Asian nations to support the Afghan operations. But as Russia's relations with the West grew increasingly strained in the following years, Moscow became increasingly critical of the U.S. role in Afghanistan.

"We expected the Americans to eradicate terrorism and drug trafficking there ... but we failed in our expectations," Kabulov said. "It's difficult for us to support something that hasn't solved problems but only exacerbated them over the past 17 years."

Senior Trump official in Pakistan for talks

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan's Foreign Ministry says Pakistan and the U.S. have reiterated their "firm commitments" to act against all militant groups that target Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The ministry's statement on Thursday says both sides, during a meeting between visiting U.S. acting Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells and Pakistani Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua, agreed to continue bilateral

engagements at all levels.

The visit came days after Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi traveled to the U.S. on an unannounced visit, later described as a private one, during which he met with U.S. officials in an effort to improve ties with Washington.

U.S. officials have long accused Pakistan of harboring militant groups that carry out attacks in Pakistan. Pakistan denies the charge, saying it targets militants without discrimination.

From The Associated Press

THE STARS AND STRIPES

Daily Newspaper of U.S. Armed Forces

in the European Theater of Operations

Vol. 1—No. 241

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Sunday, March 25, 1945

For the troops

Stars and Stripes was a primary source of news for the troops at the Front and behind the lines in World War II. Although it printed only in the European theater during the war, it covered news from all theaters.



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NATION

Trump to push infrastructure plan in Ohio

By JOHN T. BENNETT

CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will take Air Force One to Ohio — then likely on to his South Florida resort — on Thursday to try breathing life into an infrastructure plan his senior aides now say will take multiple years to bring about.

The White House hopes to get some, but not all, of his \$1.5 trillion package through Congress and signed into law this year. One senior administration official said Wednesday that White House aides expect a “strong push” to get a “big chunk” of the infrastructure plan to his desk by the end of 2018.

“We never anticipated this would be a quick or easy process,” the senior official said. “The president is in this for the long haul,” he added, saying the White House now expects parts of the package will have to wait for legislative action next year.

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan, R-Wis.,

said recently he intends to move an infrastructure overhaul package in multiple bills. The senior administration official said the White House strongly supports that approach.

But many former congressional aides and analysts have said the odds of any major legislation passing as the midterm elections near is close to zero now that a sweeping omnibus spending bill has become law.

Trump will address heavy machine operators and industrial engineers, senior administration officials said. Those are the kinds of workers they say would benefit most from his infrastructure plan. Aides say he will not announce any new proposals, just try to gin up public support for his approach.

After speaking in Ohio, the president appears headed for his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Fla., according to Federal Aviation Administration flight restrictions showing a VIP in that area over the Easter

weekend.

In Richfield, he will tout his plan in the Buckeye State as it remains stalled on Capitol Hill.

Conservative GOP members have blanched at the cost, especially since many lawmakers assume it would require more federal dollars than the White House claims. Democratic members contend it relies too much on private funds. That makes it difficult to see how the White House will wrangle ample votes in both chambers to pass its bill as-is.

“The president’s proposal would do very little to make our ailing infrastructure better,” Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., said Feb. 12. “Those (private) entities would have to either charge local taxpayers new tolls or raise taxes and other fees to pay for new infrastructure. The Trump infrastructure plan is like a Hollywood facade — it may look real from afar, but in truth, it is a flat mirage.”

The White House released Trump’s long-

promised infrastructure plan that day, a package that proposes 80 percent private investment and 20 percent in federal monies to remake the country’s roads, bridges, tunnels, airports, seaports and other transit facilities.

Since he was a candidate, Trump has bemoaned America’s foreign military conflicts and subsequent stability operations. He argues Washington should stop spending trillions of dollars overseas and instead devote that amount to rebuilding its own infrastructure.

After his aides rolled out the plan, Trump labeled it a “commonsense and bipartisan plan that every member of Congress should support.”

“I look forward to working with them, and we’re going to get the American people roads that are fixed and bridges that are fixed,” Trump said last month. “And if for any reason they don’t want to support it, hey, that’s going to be up to them.”

Sources allege Trump’s lawyer spoke of pardons for former aides

By CAROL D. LEONING, JOSH DAWSEY
AND ROSALIND S. HELDERMAN

The Washington Post

President Donald Trump’s lawyer told attorneys representing Paul Manafort and Michael Flynn last year that the president might be willing to pardon his former aides if they faced criminal charges stemming from an investigation into Russia’s election interference, according to three people familiar with the discussions.

The president’s lead lawyer at the time, John Dowd, was described as floating the idea of a pardon for Manafort, Trump’s former campaign chairman, and Flynn, the former national security adviser, at a vulnerable moment for the two men. Both Flynn and Manafort had contacts with Russians while advising Trump and were under investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s team, but neither had been charged at that point.

Mueller indicted Manafort on charges of tax fraud and money laundering in late October. Flynn pleaded guilty in December to lying to investigators and agreed to cooperate with the Mueller probe.

Dowd insisted Wednesday that he did not raise the idea of pardons with lawyers representing the two men.

“I had no such discussions with them,” Dowd said in a phone interview. “We never talked about pardons. There was no reason to talk about pardons. No, ma’am.”

A spokesman, Jason Maloni, and a former lawyer, Reginald Brown, for Manafort declined to comment. Robert Kelner, an attorney for Flynn, also declined to comment. The outreach from Dowd first was reported by The New York Times.

The allegation that Dowd offered two key witnesses in the Russia investigation a legal safety net comes amid Mueller’s increasing focus on whether the president obstructed justice by seeking to blunt or shut down the inquiry.

Legal experts said prosecutors could view floating the idea of a presidential pardon to people under investigation as a criminal effort to obstruct justice. Raising such a possibility could be considered an



Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort arrives at federal court in Washington in December.

incentive for witnesses not to cooperate with investigators.

“I’ve only been asked about pardons by the press, and have routinely responded on the record that no pardons are under discussion or under consideration at the White House,” Ty Cobb, the White House lawyer working on the Russia investigation, said in a statement.

Trump, however, did express a keen interest last spring and summer in his power to pardon, according to people familiar with the situation. While interviewing lawyers as possible candidates to represent him in the probe, aides said, Trump asked his team whether he could pardon his advisers, his family members and even himself.

One person familiar with the outreach to Manafort’s team said that during the summer, Dowd relayed to the former campaign chief’s lawyers that a pardon was a possibility. A person familiar with the Flynn discussions said Dowd called Kelner sometime last year to tell him Trump believed there was no merit to the case against Flynn and the “president would consider a pardon.”

White House aides and Trump’s legal advisers privately expressed concern about the situation Wednesday and said Dowd may have mentioned pardons off the cuff and failed to recognize the intense sensitivity of the subject at that moment.

“I hope he didn’t do it,” said one Trump aide. “It would be just awful — a terrible end to his good career.”

FBI: Manafort associate linked to Russian intel in 2016 race

By SPENCER S. HSU
AND ROSALIND S. HELDERMAN

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The FBI has found that a business associate of former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort had ongoing ties to Russian intelligence, including during the 2016 presidential campaign, when Manafort and his deputy, Rick Gates, were in touch with the associate, according to new court filings.

The documents, filed late Tuesday by prosecutors for special counsel Robert Mueller III, also allege that Gates has said he knew the associate was a former officer with the Russian military intelligence service.

The allegations underscore Mueller’s indictment in Manafort and Gates, who continued to interact with business associates in Ukraine even as they helped lead Donald Trump’s presidential campaign.

Manafort, 68, has pleaded not guilty to conspiracy, money laundering, and tax and bank fraud charges related to his lobbying work for a pro-Russian political party in Ukraine and former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich.

Gates, 45, who was deputy campaign manager for Trump and earlier had worked with Manafort in Ukraine, pleaded guilty last month to conspiracy and lying to the FBI in a cooperation deal with Mueller’s probe.

Prosecutors made the allegation without naming the Manafort associate but described his role with Manafort in detail. The description matches Konstantin Kilimnik, the Russian manager of Manafort’s lobbying office in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev.

Kilimnik did not respond to a request for comment, nor did a White House spokesman nor an attorney for Gates.

Kilimnik previously has denied intelligence ties, telling The Washington Post in a statement in June that he has “no relation to the Russian or any other intelligence service.”

A spokesman for Manafort, who is under a court gag order, declined to comment.

Manafort has acknowledged staying in frequent contact with Kilimnik during the time he worked for Manafort’s campaign. He has said he met with Kilimnik in person in May 2016 and again in New York City in Au-

gust 2016, about two weeks before Manafort resigned as Trump’s campaign chairman.

A Manafort spokesman expressed confidence in June that investigators ultimately would conclude that Manafort’s interactions with Kilimnik were “perfectly permissible and not in furtherance of some conspiracy.”

The information about the FBI’s assessment of the Manafort associate came in a court filing related to the upcoming sentencing of Manafort’s attorney Alex van der Zwaan, whose firm worked with Manafort when he served as a political consultant in Ukraine.

Van der Zwaan, 33, the son-in-law of a prominent Russian Ukrainian banker, pleaded guilty last month to lying about his September 2016 contacts with Gates and the Manafort associate, identified in court documents only as “Person A.”

Prosecutors explained that van der Zwaan had lied and withheld documents about information that was “pertinent” to their investigation — that Gates had been in direct contact during the presidential campaign with a person who “has ties to a Russian intelligence service and had such ties in 2016.”

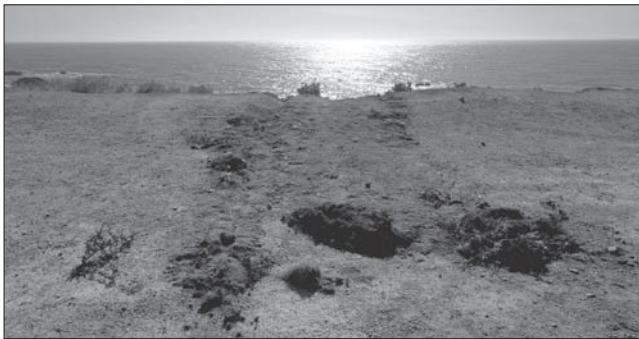
They said that when van der Zwaan was interviewed by the FBI in November, he told investigators that Gates had informed him that Person A was a former officer of the Russian military intelligence service, known as the GRU.

Kilimnik ran Manafort’s office in Kiev during the 10 years he did consulting work there. The Post reported in 2017.

During his August 2016 meeting with Kilimnik, Manafort has said he and his longtime Kiev office manager discussed, among other topics, the ongoing campaign, including the hacking of Democratic National Committee emails. Stolen DNC emails had been released by WikiLeaks the previous month and the hack was widely suspected to be the work of Russia.

During Kilimnik’s time working for Manafort in Kiev, he had served as a liaison for Manafort to the Russian national magnate Oleg Deripaska, with whom Manafort had done business. Emails previously described to The Post show that Manafort asked Kilimnik during the campaign to offer Deripaska a “private briefing” about Trump’s effort.

NATION



Tracks lead to the edge of the cliff Wednesday where the SUV of Jennifer and Sarah Hart went off the Pacific Coast Highway near Westport, Calif., on Monday.

Family killed in cliff plunge was under probe by Wash. officials

By PHUONG LE
AND TOM JAMES
Associated Press

WOODLAND, Wash. — The two women and their six adopted children traveled to festivals and events, offering free hugs and promoting unity, friends said. They raised animals and grew vegetables and last year moved onto a piece of land in rural southwest Washington, a dream of theirs.

The Hart Tribe, as they were known, also took spontaneous road trips to hike or camp, and friends believe they may have been on one of those adventures when their SUV plunged off a scenic California highway.

"We know that an entire family vanished and perished during this tragedy," said Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman on Wednesday as he appealed for help retracing where the family had been before the vehicle was found Monday.

Friends described married couple Jennifer and Sarah Hart as loving, inspiring parents who promoted social justice and exposed their "remarkable children" to art, music and nature. But neighbors said they saw signs that caused them to worry about how the home-schooled children were being cared for.

The California Highway Patrol has not determined why the vehicle went off an ocean overlook on a rugged part of coastline. A specialized team of accident investigators was trying to figure that out, Allman said.

"We have no evidence and no reason to believe that this was an intentional act," he said, adding that the scene was confusing because "there were no skid marks, there were no brake marks" at the roadside turnout where the vehicle went over.

Authorities believe six children were in the vehicle with their parents, though three siblings haven't been found.

The 100-foot drop killed the women, both 39, and their chil-



Tristan Fortsch, (Portland, Ore.) KATU News/AP
The Hart family, of Woodland, Wash., gathers at a Bernie Sanders rally in Vancouver, Wash., in March 2016.

dren, Markis Hart, 19; Jeremiah Hart, 14; and Abigail Hart, 14. Hannah Hart, 16; Devonte Hart, 15; and Sierra Hart, 12, have not been found.

"This is a tragic accident of a magnitude that cannot be measured," said Zippy Lomax, a photographer who knew the Harts.

"They were really radiant, warm, adventurous, inspiring people. They were always on some grand adventure, and the kids were living this life that was kind of like this dream," Lomax told The Associated Press. "The family was this very self-supporting unit that was impossible to miss. When they showed up to an event, they made an impression. They shattered a lot of norms and they did not shy away from controversy or adversity."

The Harts, who went to events such as rallies for presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, often showed up in matching T-shirts.

The family gained attention after Devonte Hart was photographed during a 2014 protest in Portland, Ore., over a grand jury's decision not to indict a police officer in the shooting of a black man in Ferguson, Mo. The boy, holding a "Free Hugs" sign, stood crying. A Portland officer saw his sign and asked if he could have a hug, and an emotional Hart embraced him in a picture that was shared

widely.

The Harts moved to Woodland, a small city outside Portland, Ore., in the spring of last year, partly overwhelmed by the media coverage. The multi-racial family also received death threats, Max Ribner, a friend of the family, said.

The family had a recent visit from state child protective services, Clark County sheriff's Sgt. Brent Waddell told the AP.

Next-door neighbors Bruce and Dana DeKalb said they called child services Friday because they were concerned about Devonte Hart, who they said had been coming over to their house in the past week, asking for food.

Dana DeKalb said the boy told her his parents "weren't feeding them" and were "punishing them by withholding food."

He came over almost every day for a week, and asked her to leave food in a box by the fence for him, she said.

Washington state child protective services opened an investigation Friday and tried to make contact with the family three times since Friday but weren't able to reach them, said Norah West, a spokeswoman with the state Department of Social and Health Services.

The agency had no prior history with the family, she said.

Okla. Legislature increases taxes to up teacher pay

By SEAN MURPHY
Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — A package of Oklahoma tax increases aimed at generating hundreds of millions of new dollars for teacher pay and averting statewide school closures received final legislative approval Wednesday night.

The Senate voted 36-10 to increase taxes on oil and gas production, cigarettes, fuel and lodging — narrowly receiving the three-fourths' majority needed to pass — and the chamber broke into applause afterward. The House passed the plan Monday. It is designed to generate about \$450 million for lawmakers to spend, and Gov. Mary Fallin said she "absolutely" plans to sign the package.

"We finally got the job done, and I applaud the bipartisanship of the House and Senate," Fallin said just moments after the Senate approved the bill.

It includes a \$1-per-pack tax on cigarettes, a 3-cent increase on gasoline, 6-cent increase on diesel and an increase on the oil and gas production tax from 2 to 5 percent. Amid a furious, last-minute lobbying effort by the hospitality industry, House and Senate leaders agreed to pass a separate measure to repeal the \$5-per-night hotel and motel tax that was projected to raise about

\$45 million.

A separate bill to increase teachers' pay by an average of about \$6,100 also cleared the Senate on Wednesday, along with another measure to cap itemized income tax deductions that was projected to generate another \$94 million.

Oklahoma teachers, who have not had raises since 2007, have set a statewide walkout for Monday to pressure lawmakers. Oklahoma would be the second state this year where teachers walked out. West Virginia educators won a 5 percent pay increase after going on strike.

A starting teacher in Oklahoma makes \$31,600, and the average teacher salary ranks 49th among the states and District of Columbia, according to the most recent statistics from the National Education Association. Only South Dakota and Mississippi salaries are lower.

The head of Oklahoma's largest teacher union said many districts across Oklahoma already have plans for teachers to walk out of class on Monday, but she described the legislative vote in a statement as a "truly historic moment."

"There is still work to do to get this Legislature to invest more in our classrooms," said Alicia Priest, the president of the Oklahoma Education Association.

Kansas to audit water park where boy was decapitated

Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. — A Kansas agency plans to conduct a full audit of a water park's inspection records before it reopens this spring, a state official said Wednesday after criminal charges were filed over the decapitation of a 10-year-old boy on the world's tallest waterslide there in 2016.

The state Department of Labor said it will review reports from daily inspections of rides by park staff at the Schlitterbahn park in Kansas City, Kan., before it is scheduled to reopen May 25 for its annual season. A state law enacted last year after Caleb Schwab's death requires amusement parks to keep daily reports on their rides and to give them annual inspections.

A grand jury has issued indictments with multiple criminal charges against the park; the construction company that built the giant waterslide; former park operations director Tyler Austin Miles; the ride's co-designer, John Timothy Schooley; and a co-owner

of Schlitterbahn Waterparks and Resorts, Jeffrey Wayne Henry.

Henry, Schooley and the construction company face one felony count of second-degree murder, and Miles and the park one count of involuntary manslaughter, over Schwab's death. The raft the boy was riding on the 17-story Verano ride went airborne and hit an overhead loop.

State law allows parks to hire their own staff to do daily inspections and to have private inspectors to do the annual inspections rather than state inspectors. The inspectors doing the annual reviews must be licensed engineers with two years' experience with amusement rides, have five years' experience in inspecting rides or have been certified by one of three industry groups.

Department of Labor spokeswoman Barbara Hersh said the audit will show whether the park has been conducting the required inspections and maintaining proper records on them as it prepares to reopen for the season.

NATION

Justices unsure of what to do about gerrymandering

By DAVID G. SAVAGE

Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Supreme Court justices, hearing arguments Wednesday in a Maryland gerrymandering case, signaled again they are troubled when politicians draw election districts solely to give their party more seats in Congress.

But they appeared equally frustrated over the question of what the court should do about it.

The Maryland case seemed to most of the justices to represent an extreme and obvious example of partisan gerrymandering, which, unlike racial gerrymandering, has not been entirely justified.

It is a surprising degree, the justices still seemed uncertain as to how to rule. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito said legislatures have to redraw districts after the census, and politics will invariably play some role in how the lines are drawn.

The constitutionality of partisan gerrymandering is the most significant question before the court this term. Since the 1980s, the justices have repeatedly criticized politicians for drawing election districts that entrench their party in power. But the have also repeatedly failed to rule that such politically motivated redistricting violates the Constitution.

This decade has seen more extreme gerrymandering, particularly in battleground states such as Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Republicans won sweeping victories in the 2010 midterm elections, and they used their power to redraw election maps so as to maintain control of the House of Representatives. Ohio, for example, has 12 Republicans and four Democrats in the House. North Carolina has 10 Republicans and three Democrats.

A three-judge federal court struck down North Carolina's map as unconstitutional, but the Supreme Court in January put that decision on hold.

Pennsylvania had steadily elected 13 Republicans and five Democrats, but the state supreme court struck down the map in January and had it redrawn.

Regardless of how the high court rules in the Maryland case or a still pending case from Wisconsin, the rulings are unlikely to affect the 2018 elections. The justices have said they will avoid changing the rules during an election year.

But redistricting experts warned that any attempt to rule against purely political gerrymandering could trigger even more partisan schemes after 2020. That year, when President



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Keegan Herrod, 6, of Denver, dressed as Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, stands in line outside the Supreme Court on Wednesday as the high court heard arguments on a gerrymandering case.

Donald Trump is expected to seek re-election, "could be a wave year for Democrats," said Michael Li, with the Brennan Center at New York University. If so, they could use their control over the election maps to give Democrats a decade-long advantage in Congress.

As is frequently the case, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy holds the deciding vote.

He said it would be unconstitutional for the state to say by law that it will give "a partisan advantage for one party" whenever it draws new election districts.

But Justice Stephen Breyer's critics also suggested the court has not settled on the right answer. "What do we do?" he asked one lawyer. He said the

court might want to have all three cases — Wisconsin, North Carolina and Maryland — brought back for a reargument. His comment seemed to signal the justices have not agreed on a ruling in the Wisconsin case.

However, the strength of the evidence in the Maryland case could force the court to rule.

The justices heard arguments in a Wisconsin gerrymandering case in early October but have yet to issue a ruling. In *Gill v. Whitford*, the court is deciding whether Republicans went too far when they drew a statewide election map that gave the GOP a super-majority in the statehouse in Madison even when Democrats won more votes across the state.

Former FBI agent charged with leaking documents

By SARI HORWITZ
AND MATT ZAPOTOSKY

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has charged a former Minneapolis FBI agent with leaking confidential documents to a news organization, according to a federal complaint filed in Minnesota on Tuesday.

The agent, Terry Albury, was charged with two counts of unlawfully retaining and disclosing national defense information to "a reporter for a national media organization." The complaint does not name the reporter or the organization, but it says Albury had unauthorized possession of the material between February 2016 and Jan. 31, 2017.

The Intercept published a story on Jan. 31, 2017, alleging the FBI aggressively investigates people who could be valuable sources.

According to the complaint, Albury shared a document about assessing confidential human sources or informants and another document about threats posed by domestic people "from a particular Middle Eastern country." Albury is also accused of possessing documents last year "relating to the use of an online platform for recruitment by a specific terrorist group" and failing to deliver the documents to authorities.

JaneAnne Murray and Joshua Dratel, Albury's attorneys, said in a statement: "Terry Albury served the U.S. with distinction both here at home and abroad in Iraq. He accepts full responsibility for the conduct set forth in the Information. We would like to add that as the only African-American FBI field agent in Minnesota, Mr. Albury's actions were driven by a conscientious commitment to long-term national security and addressing the well-documented systemic biases within the FBI."

This is the second legal investigation involving the Intercept. In June, Reality Leigh Winner, 25, a government contractor, was charged with mishandling classified information. Federal prosecutors said Winner gave a top-secret National Security Agency document to a news organization.

That case was revealed shortly after the Intercept posted a redacted U.S. intelligence document that involved Russian government efforts to use hacking techniques against employees of a company that provides technical support to states' voting agencies.

The Minneapolis Star Tribune reported that a search warrant application in the case revealed that the FBI linked references to secret documents in federal Freedom of Information Act requests by the Intercept in March 2016 to Albury's activity on FBI social media.

According to the Star Tribune, the FBI identified 27 government documents, including 16 classified ones, that were published online by the Intercept between April 2016 and February 2017 and accessed over two-thirds of the files.

Emails: Pence slammed in 2015 for changing law

By BRIAN SLODYSKO

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Then-Indiana Gov. Mike Pence faced a firestorm of criticism three years ago after signing a "religious freedom" law critics decried as anti-gay.

Emails released this week to The Associated Press illustrate backlash from fellow conservatives when the eventual vice president agreed to change the law in the face of boycott threats.

"Indiana is fronted by a coward," reads a March 31 email to Pence's office, which was among over 1,400 pages of documents obtained under Indiana's public records law. "I just want to show throw the ENTIRE Christian population in America under the Left's Gay Extortion Bus."

The correspondence from Pence's official and private email accounts, which the AP first reported in March, was part of Donald Trump's campaign, offer a window into one of the most challenging periods of his career.

It was a time when Pence came under intense pressure from moderate Republicans as well as the Christian right to act in the face of a growing public



DOUG MCSCHOOLE/AP

Opponents of Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act gather on the Indiana State House lawn on March 28, 2015, in Indianapolis to rally against that legislation. Then-Indiana Gov. Mike Pence faced a conservative backlash after he agreed to change the law.

relations crisis.

Emails spanning from March to July 2015 offer a glimpse of his administration's efforts to battle negative headlines from the "religious freedom" law while closely tracking what conservatives had to say about Pence, who harbored presidential ambitions.

"It has been a challenging week," chief of state Jim Attnerholt wrote in an April 2 email response to a Pence supporter who criticized the changes to the law.

Days earlier, Pence had signed the initial version of the law during a closed-door ceremony that included several well-known social conservative activists. Simmering criticisms exploded on social media and in national headlines.

It metastasized after Pence struggled to explain in an interview with ABC's George Stephanopoulos whether the law did — or didn't — allow discrimination against gay people. Celebrities called him out, left-

leaning states threatened to ban officials from traveling to Indiana and businesses ratcheted up threats of pulling out of the state.

Amid the criticism, Pence received emails of encouragement from across the country, urging him to stand his ground.

But there was a shift in tone as reporters from national news outlets swarmed the Statehouse and Pence, under intense scrutiny, called for a "fix." The changes sought to make clear business owners couldn't invoke the law to discriminate against gay people.

Once Pence signed the law, the vitriol only grew.

"Will Governor Mike 'Spineless' Pence announce his resignation today and end this calamity?" wrote Garry A. Clark.

Randi Riley, from Edgewater, Fla., wrote that Pence raised "the white flag of surrender to a ruthless horde of sexual jihadists."

In July 2016, however, Trump picked Pence to shore up his evangelical base. Before long, social conservative flocked to Pence rallies around the country, gushing over his calm demeanor and Evangelical beliefs.

WORLD

Koreas set date for summit; Trump expresses optimism

By KIM GAMEL
AND YOO KYUNG CHANG
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — North and South Korea will hold their first summit in more than a decade on April 27, the two sides said Thursday.

The date for the historic meeting between President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was set during a high-level meeting on the northern side of the truce village of Panmunjom in the tense border area.

It came days after North Korea's reclusive leader made a surprise train trip to China to reaffirm ties and to declare that he's committed to denuclearization.

President Donald Trump expressed optimism, saying his Chinese counterpart told him the meeting with Kim "went very well" and the North Korean leader "looks forward to his meeting with me."

However, he insisted that he'll maintain punishing sanctions and other moves aimed at pressuring the North Korean regime to abandon its nuclear program.

"For years and through many administrations, everyone said that peace and the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was not even a possibility," Trump

said Wednesday in a tweet. "Now there is a good chance that Kim Jong Un will do what is right for his people and for humanity."

The U.S. and South Korea also plan to begin war games Sunday after a delay to ease tensions for the Olympics and the Paralympics.

The annual military exercises usually infuriate the North, which considers them a rehearsal for an invasion. But Kim reportedly said he understood they would go on as planned this year.

While many North Korea watchers remain deeply skeptical about Pyongyang's motives, Seoul and Pyongyang continued to take steps toward improving relations.

The delegations that met Thursday were led by South Korean Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon and North Korea's Ri Son Gwon, chairman of a state agency that deals with inter-Korean affairs.

They issued a joint statement announcing the date and saying another meeting would be held on April 4 to discuss protocol and other details.

The two leaders agreed to meet following a series of breakthroughs that began with the North's participation in the Winter Olympics, which were held in the South.

That has eased tensions after

months of North Korean nuclear and missile tests and saber rattling by both sides that prompted fears of a new war on the divided peninsula.

"For the past 80 days, there have been many historic events that we had not seen before," Ri said in remarks before the closed-door meeting began. "I believe those historic records were made because we united our minds, efforts and power."

Cho thanked Ri for what he called a warm welcome and said the two sides "should consult honestly today to ensure a successful summit" according to the will of the top leaders of the North and South.

Trump agreed to hold what would be the first-ever U.S.-North Korean summit by May after South Korean officials relayed a message that Kim had invited him to meet as soon as possible and was willing to suspend nuclear and missile tests.

Kim was quoted as confirming that during his meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping earlier this week, which took place under a cloud of secrecy.

But he also signaled that Pyongyang will be demanding a price for its recent goodwill.

"The issue of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can be



Courtesy of the Joint Press Corps

South Korean Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon, center, speaks to reporters in Seoul before leaving for talks with North Korea to prepare for a summit between the leaders of the two rival nations.

resolved if South Korea and the United States respond to our efforts with goodwill, create an atmosphere of peace and stability while taking progressive and synchronous measures for the realization of peace," Kim was quoted as saying by China's state news agency Xinhua. There was no elaboration, but in the past the North Koreans have used talks to try to gain U.S. concessions and humanitarian assistance.

Many North Korea watchers have cautioned that Kim is unlikely to give up his nuclear weapons and may be trying to create divisions among the U.S., South Korea and China to disrupt the increasing effects of economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure against it.

South Korea welcomed the meetings in Beijing.

"It is very meaningful that Chairman Kim Jong Un clearly

expressed his willingness to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and hold a South-North Korea summit and North Korea-U.S. summit at the North-China summit," presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said.

"We hope a clear foundation for permanent denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the establishment of a peace regime will emerge in the upcoming South-North Korea summit and the North-U.S. summit," he said.

The Moon-Kim meeting will be only the third summit between the rival Koreas since the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty. The leaders are expected to have discussions about Kim's summit, with Trump high on the agenda.

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Ecuador suspends WikiLeaks founder's communications in London

dpa

QUITO, Ecuador — The Ecuadorian government said Wednesday it had suspended WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's communications with "the outside," in a reference to its London Embassy, where the Australian national has been residing since 2012.

Ecuador said it suspended "systems that allow Julian Assange to communicate with

the outside" due to his failure to honor a 2017 written agreement not to send messages involving "interference in relation to other states."

Assange may not use the internet or receive visitors at the embassy, according to Britain's Press Association news agency.

Assange's messages on social media "put at risk the good relations that the country maintains with the United Kingdom, with

the rest of the European Union states and other nations," said the government in Quito.

It added that it might adopt "new measures," without giving further details.

The statement was issued after Assange criticized the arrest of Catalonia's ex-leader, Carles Puigdemont, on Twitter, referring to the former fugitive as a "political prisoner."

He also posted a series of tweets about the chemical weapon attack against a former Russian spy on British soil earlier this month, saying that "the evidence (against Russia) is circumstantial."

British Foreign Office Minister Alan Duncan said Tuesday it was "time" that this miserable little worm walked out of the embassy and gave himself up to British justice."



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WORLD



B.K. BANGASH/AP

A Pakistani shopkeeper listens to Malala Yousafzai addressing a reception Thursday at the prime minister's house in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Malala Yousafzai says she will keep up fight for girls' education

By MUNIR AHMED
AND SHERIN ZADA
Associated Press

ISLAMABAD — Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai on Thursday said she was excited to be back in Pakistan for the first time since she was shot in 2012 by Taliban militants angered at her championing of education for girls.

Yousafzai, 20, said in a brief speech at a ceremony at Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi's office that she will continue to campaign for the education of girls and asked Pakistanis to be united on issues like providing better health care and education.

She said she remembered having to leave Pakistan for treatment after she was attacked. Covering her tear-filled eyes with her hands, Yousafzai said it was hard to wait for more than five years to return home.

"It is now actually happening and I am here," she said.

Abbasi praised Yousafzai for her sacrifices and role in the promotion of girls' education. He said he was happy to welcome her home, where he said terrorism has been eliminated.

Since her attack and recovery, Yousafzai has led the "Malala Fund," which she said has invested \$6 million in schools and provides books and uniforms for schoolchildren.

"For the betterment of Pakistan, it is necessary to educate girls and empower women," she said.

Earlier, tight security greeted the university student upon her arrival at Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto International Airport. Local television showed her with her parents in the lounge at the airport before leaving in a convoy of nearly 15 vehicles, many of them occupied by heavily armed

police.

Her return had been shrouded in secrecy and she was not likely to travel to her hometown of Mingora in the Swat valley, where the shooting occurred.

As news broke about Yousafzai's arrival, many of her fellow Pakistanis welcomed her.

The party of cricket-turned-opposition-leader Imran Khan said Yousafzai's return was a sign of the defeat of extremism in the country.

Yousafzai was just 14 years old but already known for her activism when Taliban gunman boarded the school van in which she was sitting and demanded to know "who is Malala?" before shooting her in the head. Two of her classmates also were injured. In critical condition, Yousafzai was flown to the garrison city of Rawalpindi before being airlifted to Birmingham in Britain.

Kin seek facts in Venezuela jail riot, fire

By JUAN CARLOS HERNANDEZ
Associated Press

VALENCIA, Venezuela — Distraught families are clamoring for information about detained relatives following a fire that Venezuela's chief prosecutor says killed 68 people when it swept through the cells of the state police station.

Angry relatives fought with police outside the facility Wednesday after being unable to get any information on casualties from Wednesday's fire, which townspeople said erupted after a disturbance involving detainees. Officers used tear gas to disperse the crowd, and local officials would confirm only that there were fatalities.

Late Wednesday, Attorney General Tarek William Saab said on his official Twitter account that 68 people were dead and nearly all of them were prisoners. He said the dead included two women who were staying overnight at the

station, but he didn't provide any further details.

Saab said four prosecutors had been named to determine what happened at the state police headquarters in Valencia, a town in Carabobo state about 100 miles west of Caracas.

It was one of the worst jail disasters in Venezuela, where human rights groups complain about poor conditions in prisons and jails. A fire at a prison in the western state of Zulia killed more than 100 inmates in 1994.

With tears streaking cheeks, people waiting outside the station Wednesday said dozens of detainees had been kept in squalid conditions and they feared the worst for their loved ones.

Some people buried their hands in their faces. Others had to be supported by friends and family as they collapsed in despair. Some wept quietly and clutched their hands in prayer.

"I don't know if my son is dead or alive," cried Aida Parra, who said she last saw her son the previous day, when she took food to him. "They haven't told me anything."

Nearly, National Guard troops wearing flak jackets and carrying rifles slung across their backs walked into and out of the station. Firetrucks and ambulances stood outside. Unwashed stretchers leaned against a wall.

A Window to Freedom, a non-profit group that monitors conditions at Venezuela's jails and prisons, said preliminary but unconfirmed information indicated the riot began when an armed detainee shot an officer in the leg. Shortly after that, a fire broke out, with flames growing quickly as the blaze spread to mattresses in the cells, it said. Rescuers apparently had to break a hole through a wall to free some of the prisoners inside.

With 1 year to go, Brexit already having an impact

By PAN PYLAS
Associated Press

LONDON — Britain is a year away from leaving the European Union, potentially with no post-Brexit agreement with its biggest trading partner.

Thursday marks the half-way point since Prime Minister Theresa May triggered the two-year process for the country's departure from the EU.

Brexit is potentially the most seismic change the British economy will have faced since World War II. It has caused massive volatility in the currency and has eroded living standards, but also has given a boost to exporting businesses. The future remains uncertain, with a range of post-Brexit scenarios still possible.

As the exit process hits half-time, here's a look at how this momentous decision has shaped the British economy and markets.

■ **Lower gear.** Before the referendum of June 2016 in which a narrow majority voted to leave the EU, the British economy had been one of the fastest-growing industrial economies for years.

Now, it's one of the slowest. It grew only 1.8 percent in 2017 and is anticipated to expand at a similarly muted tick this year.

Brexit proponents would note that the predictions of recession made ahead of the vote, by authorities like the International Monetary Fund or British Treasury, failed to materialize.

There are numerous reasons why that is.

A drop of about 15 percent in the pound's value after the referendum made exporters more competitive in international markets. Bank of England Governor Mark Carney said exporters have benefited from a so-called "sweet spot" — being able to continue to trade in the tariff-free EU but at a lower cost.

Also, somewhat ironically, much stronger growth in many countries in Europe, particularly among the 19 that use the euro

currency, has shored up economic activity in Britain.

Given that the world economy is broadly healthier than at any time since the global financial crisis a decade ago, many think Britain would be doing a lot better were it not for the prospect of Brexit. Uncertainty over Brexit has hurt business investment, and household spending has been hobbled by the rise in prices stoked by the lower pound.

■ **So why increase?** One of the more unexpected developments since the Brexit vote is that the Bank of England is raising interest rates, in contrast to the European Central Bank, which is overseeing an economy that is growing — and expected to grow over coming years — at a faster clip.

In November, the Bank of England raised its benchmark rate by a quarter-point to 0.5 percent, its first increase in a decade. It has indicated that another similar increase is likely in May.

The main reason is to contain inflation, which from well below 1 percent before the referendum has spiked to about 3 percent as the lower pound pushed up the cost of imports.

■ **Market movers.** Whereas an economy is like a tanker and can take a long time to turn, financial markets are fleet of foot.

The pound was the early lightning rod for Brexit concerns, sliding after the vote to 31-year lows against the dollar below \$1.20. Crucially, it also weakened against the euro — about 40 percent of Britain's exports go to the eurozone. The pound has recovered in recent weeks, to about \$1.40.

In the stock market, Brexit did not have as big an impact. In fact, investors in the broad FTSE All-Share index have enjoyed returns of up to 20 percent. The reason is the lower pound helped exporters and boosted earnings for the many multinationals listed on the index that make most of their money outside the U.K.

Police at the airport roughed up lawyers and forced them to leave when they tried to serve the court order. Another lawyer, James Orenge.

Miguna said in a Facebook post that authorities broke into the airport toilet where he had been held and forcibly injected him with a substance and he passed out. He said he regained consciousness when the Emirates flight arrived in Dubai.

There was no immediate response from Kenyan authorities.

From The Associated Press

Kenyan pol says he was drugged, deported

NAIROBI, Kenya — A Kenyan opposition politician alleged he was drugged and deported to Dubai early Thursday after his attempt to enter Kenya led to his being detained in an airport toilet for more than a day.

Miguna Miguna, targeted in a Kenyan government crackdown amid lingering election tensions, was deported even after a court ordered authorities to release him, lawyer Cliff Ombeta said.

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Dr. Stephen Keese is a graduate of University of Tennessee. He spent 25 years in the Army Dental Corps before retiring in 2015. He completed tours in Korea, Italy, Germany and Iraq.

Dr. David Martin Pflizer graduated in 1992 from Medical College of Georgia. Since 1993, he's been in private practice in Georgia and North Carolina. He served in the Army for a total of 14 years, active and reserve.



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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ax-throwing venue approved to serve beer

UT SALT LAKE CITY — Despite safety concerns, a recreational ax-throwing venue in Salt Lake City has been approved for a license to serve beer.

The state liquor commission approved Social Axe Throwing's request for a recreational beer license this week. The business asserted that it's "substantially similar" to other recreational businesses that serve beer.

Social Axe co-owner Mark Floyd said his company "is a recreational amenity almost identical to a bowling alley," except customers throw axes at a wood-en target.

But that nature of the business does have some members of the state commission worried. The commission asked the company to return in six months and report on any problems.

Possible Trump visit could thwart egg drop

FL WEST PALM BEACH — A potential visit to Mar-a-Lago this weekend by President Donald Trump could thwart a church's plans to drop 40,000 Easter eggs from a helicopter.

NewSound Church has two helicopter egg drops lined up for Saturday and Sunday, but an FAA notice posted online warns pilots that temporary flight restrictions will go into effect Thursday and remain through Sunday.

Church organizers told the Palm Beach Post they're holding out until the last minute. If the helicopter is grounded, they'll hide tens of thousands of treat-filled eggs the old fashioned way.

Father Jesus arrested for disturbing the peace

MS GULFPORT — A Mississippi man who called himself Father Jesus was arrested for disturbing the peace after allegedly pointing a weapon at a woman.

Gulfport Police said Jesus, 42, was arrested Sunday after a woman said he pointed a weapon at her.

Authorities said officers made contact with Jesus at a Gulfport house and he was wearing a white robe, gold-colored crown and a plainly visible shoulder holster. A 12-gauge flare gun was recovered along with flares.

Elevator malfunction strands cavern visitors

NM CARLSBAD — It took a rescue team more than three hours to hoist up three visitors who were stranded inside the elevators at Carlsbad Caverns National Park malfunctioned.

Park officials said the team set up rigging in the elevator hoist way and used harnesses to pull each visitor through the escape hatch and transfer them to another working elevator.

There were no injuries reported.

THE CENSUS

\$55K

The amount a woman was accused of stealing from a Connecticut store where she oversaw shoplifting prevention. The Norwich Bulletin reported that Janise Gabco-Bowles, 37, was charged with theft from the Kohl's in Groton where she worked as a loss prevention supervisor. Police said she made fraudulent returns and received cash in exchange for items she had never purchased. Gabco-Bowles was fired from the store in December and arrested in January.



KEITH SRAKOCIC/AP

Don't lose your marbles

William Ebitz, 7, gets instruction from Ed Ricci on the first day of the Allegheny County Marbles Tournament on Monday in Ross Township, Pa. The competition runs through Saturday, with daily winners qualifying for the championship to be held Memorial Day weekend in downtown Pittsburgh. Those championship winners qualify to go to the 95th National Marbles Tournament in Wildwood, N.J.

Winner picked in contest to prevent carp invasion

MI TRAVERSE CITY — The state of Michigan has declared a winner in its contest to find new ideas for preventing Asian carp from invading the Great Lakes.

The top award of \$200,000 in the "Carp Tank" competition goes to Edem Tsikata, a software consultant at Harvard Medical School in Boston.

He proposed using specially designed propellers to generate a wall of bubbles that the fish would find noisy and painful, causing them to turn away.

Three other proposals also received cash awards.

Coyote found on fourth floor of museum

NY ALBANY — Authorities said a coyote that was found on an outdoor mezzanine at the New York State Museum in Albany was tranquilized

and removed from the building.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation tweeted that its wildlife officers shot the animal with a tranquilizer dart on the museum's fourth-floor mezzanine.

Officials said the coyote was taken to the DEC's wildlife health lab outside Albany for evaluation.

3 boys find part of a mastodon jawbone

MS VICKSBURG — Three boys on spring break found a part of a mastodon jawbone while exploring family property in Mississippi.

The Vicksburg Post reported that two brothers and a cousin made the discovery near Bovina, a small community about 11 miles east of the Mississippi River.

Seventh-grader Caid Sellers, fifth-grader Shawn Sellers and third-grader Michael Mahalite found something they initially thought was a log, but then saw that it had teeth.

The Sellers' father took it to the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science in Jackson, where paleontology curator George Phillips confirmed it was a lower left jawbone from a mastodon.

Police: Hit, run suspect stole the victim's car

OH CLEVELAND — Police say a man killed in a hit-and-run in Cleveland had his own vehicle stolen by one of his suspects.

Authorities were called to the scene where they found the 68-year-old victim in the street. The man was taken to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Police said witnesses saw the man run out of his house and get into his car. The man tried to drive away, but hit a parked car.

The man got out of his car and was hit by another vehicle. Police said one of the vehicle's occupants stole the man's idling car and drove away.

Team raises money to buy championship rings

MN NEW HOPE — A crowdfunding campaign helped a Twin Cities area high school basketball team acquire lasting reminders of its state championship.

Cooper High School football coach Willie Howard started a GoFundMe campaign in hopes of buying championship rings for the girls' basketball team to commemorate the win earlier this month, KARE-TV reported.

The girls thought they'd receive the rings for free after being given a catalog of ring options to choose from. They were upset to learn the rings cost \$300 each because many couldn't afford the price, said senior T.T. Longs.

The community quickly rallied around the group. The campaign passed its goal of \$5,000 on Tuesday, with more than 100 people donating.

From wire reports



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STARS AND STRIPES®

BUSINESS/WEATHER

Service aims to follow users across devices

By ANICK JESDANUN
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Some 60 companies, including such brands as Subway, Sprint and the NFL, are joining forces to help each other follow you around online.

Adobe, a company better known for Photoshop and PDF files, says the new Device Co-op initiative it is organizing will help companies offer more personalized experiences and make ads less annoying by filtering out products and services you have already bought or will never buy. Under the ini-

tiative, Adobe can tell you're the same person on a home PC, a work laptop, a phone and a tablet by analyzing past sign-ins with member companies.

The initiative comes amid heightened privacy sensitivities after reports Facebook allowed political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica to harvest data on millions of Facebook users to influence elections. Facebook also has been criticized for collecting call and text logs from phones on Google's Android system.

Adobe timed Wednesday's announcement to a digital market-

ing conference it is hosting this week in Las Vegas. Adobe executives said they believed their initiative offers strong privacy safeguards and weren't worried about a backlash in light of the Facebook scandal.

Adobe says no personal data is being exchanged among participating companies, which also include Allstate, Lenovo, Intel, Barnes & Noble, Subaru and the Food Network. Adobe says the program links about 300 million consumers across nearly 2 billion devices in the U.S. and Canada.

The program would let Sprint,

for instance, know that Bob is already a customer when he visits from a new device. Bob wouldn't get a promotion to switch from another carrier but might get instead a phone upgrade offer.

All this might feel creepy, but such cross-device tracking is already commonly done by matching attributes such as devices that from the same internet location, or IP address.

Adobe says it will give consumers a chance to opt out of such tracking. And it's breaking industry practices in a few ways. Adobe says it will honor opt-out requests

for all participating companies and for all devices at once. It's more typical for such setups to require people do so one by one. All companies in the initiative are listed on Adobe's website, a break from some companies' practice of referring only to unspecified partners.

But in taking an opt-out approach, which is common in the industry, Adobe assumes that users consent. And it places the burden on consumers to learn about this initiative and to figure out how they can opt out of it.

Facebook revamps privacy tools as it faces EU regulations

By BARBARA ORTUTY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Facebook is giving its privacy tools a makeover as it feels from critics over its data practices and faces tighter European regulations in the coming months.

The changes won't affect Facebook's privacy policies or the types of data it gathers. But the company hopes its 2.2 billion users will have an easier time navigating its privacy and security settings. Facebook says it also wants to give users a simpler way to access and download the data it collects.

Wednesday's announcement follows revelations that a Trump-affiliated consulting firm, Cambridge Analytica, got data on millions of

Facebook users. That included information on friends of people who had downloaded a psychological quiz app, even though those friends hadn't given explicit consent to sharing. In addition, Facebook is also facing widespread criticism for collecting years of contact names, telephone numbers and call and text histories from Android users.

On Monday, the Federal Trade Commission said it is investigating Facebook over its privacy practices.

Facebook has been working on the changes in preparation for the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which were approved two years ago and take effect May 25. The rules are designed to make it easier for consumers to give and withdraw consent

for the use of their data. They apply to any company that collects data on EU residents, no matter where it is based.

To comply with this, Facebook is adding a section called "access your information," a secure way for users to manage data they've shared with the company, including status updates, comments and things they have searched for. That's where people can go to delete information or download a copy. While this download was already possible, it took some time to figure out how to do it. Cox said the changes let people browse through their information in detail, without having to download it. For example, users will now be able to look up a post from a specific date in the past.

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro costs (March 30)	\$1.2642
Dollar buys (March 30)	69.7910
British pound (March 30)	\$1.44
Japanese yen (March 30)	103.00
South Korean won (March 30)	1,040.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3771
Canada (Dollar)	\$1.4052
China (Yuan)	6.2813
Denmark (Krone)	6.0485
Egypt (Pound)	17.6414
Euro	\$1.2325/0.8113
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8487
Hungary (Forint)	253.16
Israel (Shekel)	3.5086
Japan (Yen)	106.35
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2997
Norway (Krone)	7.8524
Philippines (Peso)	52.35
Poland (Zloty)	3.42
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7504
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3110
South Korea (Won)	1,063.83
Taiwan (New Taiwan Dollar)	0.9551
Thailand (Baht)	31.26
Turkey (Lira)	3.9662

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance. For Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, for nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	4.75
Discount rate	2.25
Federal funds market rate	1.44
3-month bill	1.74
30-year bond	2.99

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Germany	\$2.937	\$3.217	\$3.450	\$3.299
Change in price	+5.0 cents	+4.7 cents	+4.7 cents	+3.8 cents
Netherlands	--	\$3.530	\$3.672	\$3.759
Change in price	--	+10.4 cents	+9.8 cents	+11.3 cents
U.K.	--	\$3.102	\$3.395	\$3.244
Change in price	--	+4.7 cents	+4.7 cents	+3.8 cents
Azores	--	--	\$3.393	--
Change in price	--	--	+4.7 cents	--
Belgium	--	\$2.876	\$3.104	\$3.141
Change in price	--	No change	No change	No change
Turkey	--	--	\$3.271	\$3.120*
Change in price	--	--	+4.7 cents	+3.8 cents
Italy	--	\$4.050	--	\$4.088
Change in price	--	No change	--	No change

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	--	\$3.199	--	\$3.039
Change in price	--	+5.0 cents	--	+3.0 cents
Norway	\$2.679	--	--	\$3.039
Change in price	+5.0 cents	--	--	+3.0 cents
South Korea	\$2.719	\$2.989	\$3.229	\$3.079
Change in price	+5.0 cents	+4.0 cents	+5.0 cents	+4.0 cents
Guam	\$2.709**	\$2.989	\$3.229	--
Change in price	+5.0 cents	+4.0 cents	+5.0 cents	--

* Diesel EPD ** Midgrade
For the week of March 27-April 6

MARKET WATCH

March 28, 2018

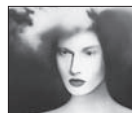
Dow Jones Industrials	-9.29
	23,848.42
Nasdaq composite	-59.58
	6,949.23
Standard & Poor's 500	-7.82
	2,605.00
Russell 2000	-0.54
	1,513.03

WEATHER OUTLOOK



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

WEEKEND



Jack White turns
to new influences
Music, Page 36



Spielberg reaches back
to the '80s, into VR-based
future in film adaptation of
Ernest Cline's sci-fi novel

Q&A, Page 24

Movie review, Page 25

WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS

Listening to random sounds can unlock a trapped mind

By LISA NAPOLI
Tribune Interactive

David Tobin took to the stage at a recent technology conference in downtown Los Angeles, asked the 500 attendees to close their eyes, and turned up the sound so they could sample his wares: a textured, layered soundscape that he calls an "audiojack."

A thousand eyes clamped shut as they collectively heard a ball thudding into a glove. A crackling bat. Fans roaring with approval. "How does what you're hearing make you feel? What does it make you remember? There are no right or wrong answers," Tobin told the group, who'd gathered for demonstrations and discussions on how technology can improve the lives of our rapidly aging population. "It's all up to you to imagine," he said.

Taking back our imaginations from an onslaught of words, images, video and other stimuli is Tobin's goal with his business, Audiojack, so named, he says, because he hopes listeners will get "jacked" by the sounds.

A former television producer and one-time manager of the famous Roxy Theater on Hollywood's Sunset Strip, Tobin happened on the idea by accident. Audiojack, so named, he says, because he hopes listeners will get "jacked" by the sounds. A former television producer and one-time manager of the famous Roxy Theater on Hollywood's Sunset Strip, Tobin happened on the idea by accident. Audiojack, so named, he says, because he hopes listeners will get "jacked" by the sounds. A former television producer and one-time manager of the famous Roxy Theater on Hollywood's Sunset Strip, Tobin happened on the idea by accident. Audiojack, so named, he says, because he hopes listeners will get "jacked" by the sounds.

Next he shared it with his mother, a teacher, who brought it into her classroom and saw that kids

ORLANDO SENTINEL/TNS

seemed particularly engaged after a listening session. When a friend sampled it for his mother, who in turn played the soundscape for dementia patients she cared for at a senior center, Tobin began to realize he'd made something that had broad appeal and a useful application.

Senior citizens with even the most advanced memory loss have powerfully responded to his product. One elderly listener who'd not spoken a complete sentence in weeks was able to articulate memories triggered by the sound of cooking breakfast or of a tiger in the wild.

Tobin received similar encouragement from educators and students at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Mass., who asked him to make more audiojacks, and even invited him for a group session. Students worked in an on-campus studio to make their own "movie for the mind."

Tobin sells the audiojacks for institutional use with lesson plans and prompts, but it's also available to individual users in mobile app form. There's one free available in each category, and an annual subscription costs \$14.99. Lately, he said, he's seen a surge in downloads and mail from users who like listening to them for no other reason than to space out. Consider it an active form of meditation.

where you can choose to imagine any visuals you like or none at all.

Tobin considers it the antithesis to virtual reality, another popular form of tech-mediated experience. "VR is so stimulating," he said. "You're locked in, your eyes are peeled, you can't get away from it. Here, you close your eyes and do it on your terms."

ON THE COVER: Tye Sheridan stars in "Ready Player One."

Warner Bros. Pictures

GADGET WATCH

Smart sprinklers, just in time for spring

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

I've been a fan of the Rachio intelligent sprinkler controller for many reasons. Among them, it saves me money on my monthly water bills.

Now Rachio has just launched an even smarter system with the Rachio 3 Smart Sprinkler Controller and Rachio 3 Wireless Flow Meter.

The sprinkler controller system manages your lawn watering. After connecting the system to Wi-Fi, you control watering days, how long each zone waters, scheduling (odd, even, every three days, etc.) or manually with a user-friendly app.

During the app setup, it automatically finds a local weather station, which determines the amount of rain in the area and whether watering is needed.

While watering, Rachio's water-saving feature breaks up the watering schedule by zone, so zones right next to each other don't go off consecutively. This maximizes your soil's absorption rate by not flooding it.

Now, the new Rachio 3 Smart Sprinkler Controller adds even more features including 5 GHz wireless compatibility (and 2.4 GHz) and a first-ever residential wireless flow meter.

When a leak is detected, you'll be alerted via the app, and the flow meter will automatically shut off water supply, protecting against landscape damage, flooding and wasted water.

Other new features include buttons on the unit for controlling the system (Rachio 2 is button free, controlled only with the app), upgraded weather intelligence and easy press connectors for 1/2" and 1/4" gauge wiring.

Both of the Rachio systems I've used were as simple to install as plugging in a lamp.

Online: rachio.com; presale launch special of \$50 off Rachio 3 8-zone, \$80 off the 16-zone or the bundle with the flow meter. Regular pricing will be \$249.99 for the 8-zone, or \$379 for the 16-zone, and \$99.99 for flow meter

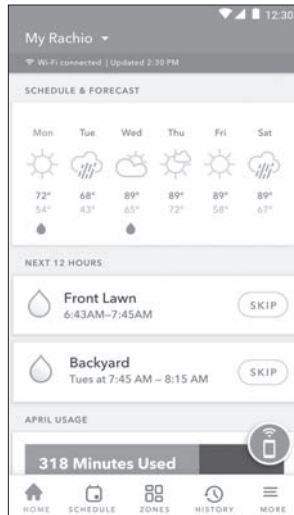
Computer companies are starting to eliminate wired USB keyboards, which forces you into the wireless, battery-powered models. But to the rescue comes Matias.

The company launched a series of wired USB keyboards for Macs and PCs that work perfectly. The RGB-backlit keyboards are look modern with choices of silver and space gray aluminum for Mac, and black aluminum for PC users.

Each keyboard features a Spectrum Color Dial to control the backlit colors.

One end of the dial gets the keyboard to white, and turning it to the right gives you a rainbow full of options — or, as Matias calls it, a continuous spectrum of colors.

The Matias website also pointed out an added feature when using a keyboard with the color dial. It's known that you should reduce the amount of blue-light exposure at night since it contributes to poor sleeping, so with the dial you



Rachio/TNS

The Rachio sprinkler controller system connects to your existing Wi-Fi network to fully manage your lawn watering.

can easily phase out the blues for nighttime use. Mac keyboards have a built-in USB 2.0 port, which is perfect for plugging in a mouse or a mouse dongle.

Layouts are available for the U.S. and many other countries. The Mac version has Mac-friendly function keys.

Online: matias.ca; \$99

Scosche's flatOUT LED Realtree 3-foot charge and sync cables are designed with a handy LED light built right into the cable.

The light has two functions: when it pulses red it's charging; when you see blue the charging is complete.

Realtree has partnered with Scosche to give the cables an attractive camouflage look for outdoor enthusiasts.

The cables feature a flat design that stays tangle free. They are available with micro USB (\$14.99) or Lightning (\$17.99) connections. Online: scosche.com

ITUNES MUSIC

The top 10 songs on iTunes for the week ending March 22:

1. "Found/Tonight," Ben Platt & Lin-Manuel Miranda
2. "God's Plan," Drake
3. "Freedy Friday" (feat. Chris Brown), Lil Dicky
4. "Meant to Be" (feat. Florida Georgia Line), Bebe Rexha
5. "Whatever It Takes," Imagine Dragons
6. "The Middle," Zedd, Maren Morris & Grey
7. "In My Blood," Shawn Mendes
8. "I Can Only Imagine," MercyMe
9. "Zombie," Bad Wolves
10. "You Make It Easy," Jason Aldean

— Compiled by AP

SPOTIFY MUSIC

The top 10 songs on Spotify for the week ending March 22:

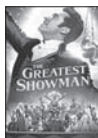
1. "God's Plan," Drake
2. "Psycho" (feat. Ty Dolla Sign), Post Malone
3. "SAD!" XXXTENTACION
4. "FRIENDS," Marshmello
5. "X," Nicky Jam
6. "IDGAF," Dua Lipa
7. "The Middle," Zedd, Maren Morris & Grey
8. "All the Stars" (with SZA), Kendrick Lamar
9. "Look Alive" (feat. Drake), BlocBoy JB
10. "Love Lies" (with Normani), Khalid

— Compiled by Stars and Stripes

ITUNES MOVIES IBOOKS

The top 10 movies on iTunes for the week ending March 25:

1. "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle"
2. "The Greatest Showman"
3. "Pitch Perfect 3"
4. "I, Tonya"
5. "Star Wars: The Last Jedi"
6. "Downsizing"
7. "Thor: Ragnarok"
8. "The Shape of Water"
9. "Justice League"
10. "Coco"



— Compiled by AP

The top 10 books on iBooks for the week ending March 25:

1. "The Great Alone," Kristin Hannah
2. "The Escape Artist," Brad Meltzer
3. "The Wife Between Us," Greer Hendricks & Sarah Pekkanen
4. "Little Fires Everywhere," Celeste Ng
5. "Accidental Heroes," Danielle Steel
6. "The Woman in the Window," A.J. Finn
7. "Shock Wave," Clive Cussler
8. "The Secret Mother," Shalini Boland
9. "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F-," Mark Manson
10. "The Flight Attendant," Chris Bohjalian

— Compiled by AP

APPS

The top paid iPhone apps for the week ending March 25:

1. Minecraft
2. Heads Up!
3. Human Anatomy Atlas 2018
4. Toca Life: After School
5. Plague Inc.
6. iSchedule
7. Pocket Build
8. Bloons TD 5
9. Facetime
10. Geometry Dash

— Compiled by AP

WEEKEND

CHECK IT OUT

Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

1

**This week on TV:
Hello, welcome
back, goodbye**

The wave of television shows returning or debuting in the spring continues this week. New on the list is "Barry," as "Saturday Night Live" veteran Bill Hader is deadly serious as a hitman bitten by the acting bug. The highly publicized return of "Roseanne" — same cast, different millennium — lured 18.4 million viewers to its stateside debut on ABC this week. "The Americans," about a couple of Russian spies, jumps a few years forward in time to 1986 for its final season. And legal drama "Suits" suits up for its last season with soon-to-be-royal Meghan Markle.

- Series premiere of 'Barry' airs Saturday on AFN-Spectrum.
- Season 6 premiere of 'The Americans' airs Saturday on AFN-Spectrum.
- Series return of 'Roseanne' airs Monday on AFN-Pulse.
- Mid-season 7 premiere of 'Suits' airs Tuesday on AFN-Spectrum.



Clockwise from upper left: Roseanne Barr and John Goodman in "Roseanne"; Bill Hader in "Barry"; Keri Russell and Matthew Rhys in "The Americans"; Meghan Markle and Wendell Pierce in "Suits."

2

**New Jack White album
a little of everything**

Quirky, cranky, brilliant musician Jack White isn't afraid to explore new musical influences, or unsettle longtime fans. His third solo album, "Boarding House Reach," assembles all sorts of elements, from rock, to blues, to jazz, to funk — even rap and country. And, since it's Jack White, it works, creating something new, unlikely and utterly amazing.

- Profile, review on Pages 36-37.

3

**'Magic: The Gathering'
gets online upgrade**

Competition to make a credible online version of the physical card game Magic: The Gathering has led to the latest iteration, "Magic: The Gathering Arena." The game incorporates flash and style as it replicates building a deck and playing against an opponent almost perfectly. "Arena" is still in beta, but that just means you can jump in early.

- Game review on Page 26.

4

**'Jesus Christ Superstar'
airs day after Easter**

Easter is a great day for family, hunting for eggs, attending church, eating ham or whatever your tradition happens to be. This year, you can gather the following day to watch the live musical "Jesus Christ Superstar," starring John Legend, Sara Bareilles and Alice Cooper in Andrew Lloyd Webber's rock opera.

- Profile on Page 43; 'Jesus Christ Superstar' airs Monday on AFN-Movie.

WEEKEND: MOVIES

A PAEAN TO GEEK CULTURE

Spielberg, Cline pool their nostalgia to tell new story in 'Ready Player One'



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

Adapted from a novel by Ernest Cline and directed by Steven Spielberg, "Ready Player One" features characters who escape a dystopian future by plugging into an alternative universe using virtual reality headsets.

By JOSH ROTTENBERG
Los Angeles Times

Steven Spielberg was a gamer before there was a name for such a thing, and he has the stories to prove it. He can tell you about playing Pong in 1974 on Martha's Vineyard with Richard Dreyfuss during the filming of "Jaws." Years later, when he was making 1982's "E.T.," he had a Missile Command arcade cabinet hauled to the set because he was obsessed with trying to score more than a million points.

Combine that abiding love of video games with Spielberg's deep association with the 1980s—a decade that cemented his reputation as Hollywood's preeminent hitmaker—and he seemed fated by the movie gods to direct the big-budget adaptation of Ernest Cline's best-selling 2011 sci-fi novel "Ready Player One."

Set in a dystopian near-future where people spend much of their lives in a virtual-reality realm called the Oasis, "Ready Player One" centers on a high-stakes digital treasure hunt in which contestants search for '80s-pop-culture-inspired Easter eggs left behind by the brilliant creator of the Oasis, James Halliday. Mash together "Willy Wonka

& the Chocolate Factory" and "The Matrix," add eye-popping action sequences and countless retro references to '80s and '90s totems and you're in the ballpark of the film.

For Cline and his co-screenwriter, Zak Penn, Spielberg was the dream director to helm this paean to geek culture. "Someone asked us, who was our second choice?" Penn says. "It was nobody followed by nobody. I mean, once you have him, everything else seems wrong."

On a recent afternoon, Spielberg, 71, and Cline, 45, sat down to discuss the challenge of bringing Cline's ambitious book to the screen, the lure of nostalgia and the future of virtual reality.

Los Angeles Times: Steven, you've said that when you first read the script for "Ready Player One," you loved it, but your initial gut reaction was that a younger filmmaker should probably direct it. Why?

Spielberg: I just saw how hard this was going to be. This is the third-hardest movie I've ever made behind "Jaws" and "Saving Private Ryan," in that order. I was exhausted thinking about what was ahead of me if I committed to it, and I thought, "Well, maybe a director in their 20s wouldn't be as intimidated because they would have no experience to intimidate them." Yet I was so enthralled by

the possibilities that I just said, "Well, if I get into trouble, I'll just go to one of my younger director partners and have them come help me."

Ernie, what does it feel like for you to have this filmmaker who was one of the key architects of your childhood now adapting your novel?

Cline: It's really hard to imagine. I feel like I'm a testament to what happens when you celebrate the things you love kind of unabashedly. When I wrote "Ready Player One," it was like building a bonfire or a searchlight announcing, "Here's what I love and here's why I love it—and don't you love it too?" And by doing that, I've managed to draw the very people who inspired me to write the story to collaborate with me.

They say, "Be bold and powerful forces will come to your aid." And that's what's happened.

Steven, you and your films are name-checked throughout the book. You're not known for including a lot of winking nods to your own past work in your movies. So how did you navigate that?

Spielberg: When I was first given the script by Warner Bros., I said, if I determine to take the leap, I'm going to have to cut out at least 70 percent of my own cultural references. Because otherwise it's going to be like primping in front of

a mirror, and I'm just not going to let myself do that.

I pride myself on my modesty. But I was part of the '80s, and I know that. I'm objective enough about my own work and about the past to know that it would be a sin to cut out the DeLorean (from "Back to the Future," which Spielberg produced) and the T. Rex (from "Jurassic Park") and maybe a few other things that came from my movies. So I left about 20 percent of them in from the book.

Particularly for anyone who grew up in the '80s, "Ready Player One" is steeped in nostalgia for the pop culture of that time. But there's an argument that Hollywood is already too fixated on nostalgia, with endless remakes and reboots, and that constantly mining the past can be a creative dead-end. What do you say to that?

Cline: Well, that's what I love about "Ready Player One"—it's not a remake or a reboot. It takes all of that culture and it tells a new story.

When I was writing "Ready Player One," I thought of the pop culture as being similar to the mythology in the "Indiana Jones" films. You may not know too much about the Holy Grail or the Lost Ark or how much of that is true, but you know enough to know who the good guys are and who the bad guys are and who you're rooting for. I never felt like the plot of "Ready Player One" hinged on coming in with any knowledge. The story still works on its own.

Spielberg: You know, desperately seeking escape is not nostalgia. It's something we're all familiar with. Escapism is something, especially today, that people are craving more than ever before just to get out of the desperately depressing news cycle. There have been desperately depressing news cycles in every decade from time to time, but it's pretty profound now. And so I thought, "This is the right time for this."

Do you share the book's nostalgia for the '80s? Or is your personal pull toward your own childhood?

Spielberg: My childhood is the '60s. I love the era of the Beatles and the Stones and the birth of a Civil Rights movement that changed the world. That's where I return usually. But the '80s was the era of my first really big successes as a writer of "Raiders" and "E.T." and the films I made then. And it was the most fun-loving decade I remember. It wasn't a cynical decade at all. The economy was relatively stable, and things were relatively calm. And we had an actor as president. (Laughs)

As fun as it aims to be, "Ready Player One" presents a pretty bleak vision of a future in which the world has descended to such a state of collapse that people can only find satisfaction in virtual reality. How plausible do you think that is?

Cline: I worry that we're already there. So many people spend so much of their time online. I think that already the real world suffers from neglect due to the amount of entertainment that we have. Every movie, every song, every piece of art—everything that can be digitized, you have instant access to on the internet. It's easy to escape into escapism now more than ever. So for me, it's about striking a balance.

Spielberg: I think the future, VR is going to be the super drug. The message of the film is simply, it's your choice. Where do you want to spend the majority of your time? Do you want to spend it with real people in a real world, which is often harder than spending it in a virtual world where you can be the person you always wanted to be, where the id becomes the self? Is that a world you really want to live in for the rest of your life?



"I feel like I'm a testament to what happens when you celebrate the things you love kind of unabashedly. When I wrote "Ready Player One," it was like building a bonfire or a searchlight announcing, "Here's what I love and here's why I love it—and don't you love it too?" And by doing that, I've managed to draw the very people who inspired me to write the story to collaborate with me."

Ernest Cline

on Steven Spielberg helming the film adaptation of his novel "Ready Player One"

WEEKEND: MOVIES

By MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN
The Washington Post

The Oasis — the virtual-reality universe in which much of “Ready Player One” takes place, and where the population of its dystopian world escapes from the misery of real life by donning digital avatars — is, in the words of its creator, “full of the things that people love.” (Or, as one wag sitting behind me at a recent screening of the new Steven Spielberg-directed sci-fi thriller observed, with a snort, “Some people.”)

You might be one of the people who loves “Ready Player One,” or you might not. But it will not be because of a lack of stuff to love. The pop-culture detritus of the late 20th century — specifically, for the most part, the Reagan years — is crammed into the Oasis, a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (or MMORPG) that feels like mainlining the VH1 show “I Love the ’80s.”

References to the Atari 2600 gaming system, Batman, Buckaroo Banzai, “Back to the Future,” Chuckie from “Child’s Play,” King Kong, Jeeves of the search engine Ask.com, the robot from “The Iron Giant,” a Rubik’s Cube, “Stapin’ Alive” from “Saturday Night Fever” and Stanley Kubrick’s “The Shining” swirl in a soup teeming with forgotten trash and fondly remembered treasures. Surely, there’s a little something in there for (almost) everyone to love.

Set in 2045 in a decaying part of Columbus, Ohio, known as the Stacks — so called because of the trailers that are piled atop each other like Jenga blocks —

“Ready Player One” centers on Wade Watts (Tye Sheridan), a teenage geek who spends most of his free time (and much of the plot of the movie) inside the Oasis. There, he appears not as himself, but as his digitized doppelganger: a platinum-haired version of his aspirational self called Parzival (after the Arthurian hero who quested for the Holy Grail).

Here, Parzival’s quarry is something equally elusive: a digital artifact — in gaming-speak,



Tye Sheridan stars in “Ready Player One,” Steven Spielberg’s adaptation of the best-selling novel.

Warner Bros. Pictures

‘Ready Player One’

Pop culture-soaked film fun at times, tedious at others

an Easter egg — that has been hidden inside the Oasis by its late creator, James Halliday (Mark Rylance), whose fortune will be inherited by whoever finds it. Assisting Wade/Parzival in his mission are Samantha, aka the pixieish, anime-eyed avatar Art-3mis (Olivia Cooke), and three gamers Wade knows only as avatars: a muscle-bound man-mountain named Aech (pronounced “H”), the samurai Daito and the

character descriptions with a grain of salt. As the New Yorker cartoon says, “On the internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.”

This tension — between the real world and the digital one — provides much of the nuance, if there is any, in “Ready Player One.” “Reality is a bummer,” someone says. But like “Blade Runner 2049,” it’s ironically in the dingy, dirty real world that the most engaging parts of the film take place, and not in

the hologram-like perfection of places like the Oasis. Co-written by Zak Penn (“X-Men: The Last Stand”) and Ernest Cline, who wrote the original 2011 book, the story is a fairly straightforward digital scavenger hunt: part “Tron” and part “Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.” An evil corporate titan bent on world domination (Ben Mendelsohn) is the requisite bad guy, a clichéd role that is taken down a great peg by the sniping

of T.J. Miller as his whining, slightly neurotic henchman.

In the end, whether you love or hate this movie will depend on how you feel about video games — not just as narrative, but as art.

Because so much of the action of “Ready Player One” takes place in the Oasis, so much of the film feels like watching “Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within.” As with that 2001 film — the first photorealistic, all-CGI feature, and the most expensive movie based on a video game ever — there’s something off-putting about looking at avatars for long periods of time. They’re less like watching a movie than like playing a video game — or, rather, like watching a video game over someone’s shoulder.

Long, long passages of “Ready” — and at nearly 2½ hours, it’s a long, long film — feel less like watching a movie than like playing a video game — or, rather, like watching a video game over someone’s shoulder.

Spielberg, at 71, directs with the verve of a 20-something (or maybe a 71-year-old with a good memory). If “Ready Player One” is tedious at times, it’s also oodles of fun at others, especially during the extended “Shining” sequence, which uses actual clips from the 1980 thriller (Kubrick’s film, like many of the other movie references, comes from Warner Bros., the studio behind “Ready Player One,” which made it easy to get the rights.)

There’s a meta quality to “Ready Player One” that is an intriguing — and underutilized — asset. When Parzival finally meets Halliday, late in the film, it is not as the game designer’s avatar, a Gandalf-like wizard with the colossally stupid name of Anorak. (Doesn’t it mean “ski jacket”?) Rather, Halliday looks just as he did in life.

“Are you an avatar?” asks Parzival. “Are you alive?”

“No,” Halliday answers to both questions before disappearing. That mystery, hanging in the air unanswered, is the most interesting and infuriating thing about “Ready Player One.”

“Ready Player One” is rated PG-13 for sequences of sci-fi action violence, bloody images, some drug use, material, partial nudity and language. Running time: 140 minutes.



LONGGATE/AP photos

‘Acrimony’

A faithful wife (Taraji Henson) tired of standing by her devious husband (Lyrrik Bent) is enraged when it becomes clear she has been betrayed in the psychological thriller “Acrimony,” written and directed by Tyler Perry. A review of the film was not available at press time. “Acrimony” is rated R for language, sexual content and some violence. Running time: 120 minutes.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



'Magic: The Gathering Arena' an exciting addition to online version of collectible card game

BY MICHAEL S. DARNELL
Stars and Stripes

Magic: The Gathering's unmatched longevity, popularity and intricacy has made it the gold standard for collectible card games. For decades, Wizards of the Coast dominated the genre and expanded its physical cards into various online offerings, the most popular of which is the simply titled "Magic: The Gathering Online."



Photos courtesy of Wizards of the Coast

But as the saying goes, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

Enter "Magic: The Gathering Arena," an online-only version of the game that is attempting to bring together the glamour of Hearthstone and the deep, intricate play of Magic.

And man, does it ever deliver. At least as far as the game and presentation go.

"Arena," even though still in beta, is an enormous step up from both "Duels" and "Magic Online." It has an almost complete Magic experience with four cards per deck, lack of rarity restriction in deck building and priority holding that "Duels" lacked.

If some of those things don't make sense, don't worry. Basically, "Arena" replicates building a deck and playing it against an opponent almost perfectly, with plenty of flash and style to make it almost as interesting to watch as it is to play.

When a powerful card hits the battlefield, colorful animations explode from the card and appropriately epic sound

Then came along "Hearthstone." Almost overnight, Magic's online versions took a hit — longtime celebrities of the game abandoned "MTGO" for Blizzard's flashier, easier-to-access game.

While "Magic: The Gathering Online" continued to draw in customers, its dry presentation and clunky interface can't even begin to compare to "Hearthstone's" charm and visual beauty.

In an attempt to better compete, Wizards attempted to pivot their entry-level "Duels of the Planeswalkers" into a closer analog of "Hearthstone." However, that game didn't offer a true Magic: The Gathering experience, and updates lagged behind their real-world offerings.

As a result, it was not well received, and Wizards abruptly canceled it in June 2017.

effects follow every action, from countering spells to smacking an opponent for massive damage.

In short, visually speaking, it is to "MTGO" what "Jet Set Radio" is to an Excel spreadsheet.

But "Arena" still has a long way to go.

There are little things that need tweaking — deck building is a little clunkier than it needs to be, phase stops during the games themselves are finicky and auto-tapping of mana can lead to game losses.

But those issues pale in comparison to the economy, which, to be fair, is still a work in progress. In fact, it's so much in flux that for the moment actual money

can't be spent on the game and progress and card collections are still being reset with major updates. At the moment, the economy is simply unacceptable.

Cards can be earned by winning enough games — right now it's five games per week — to earn a pack. Packs contain eight cards and some of those cards can be "wildcards" that can be swapped for any card of corresponding rarity.

Individual, random cards are also earned by completing quests — for instance, cast 15 blue spells, play two games with a certain type of deck, etc. Opening packs also feeds into the vault, which slowly ticks up and once opened, gives you more rewards.

And at some point, gems — a funny money currency — will become available for purchase, but Wizards has yet to reveal how those will factor into the economy.

All of this sounds reasonable, at least on paper, leaving plenty of methods to earn cards without spending a dime and a potential avenue for purchasing packs of cards.

However, the reality of the system is much harsher. Magic is a game that serves many masters. The casual fans, the people who only play drafts — a popular format in which eight players open three packs of cards, select one at a time and pass them around, then build decks out of the random pulls — and the hardcore grinders.

It also has a larger deck building foundation than "Hearthstone." In "Hearthstone," players are limited to two versions of any one card. In Magic, it's four copies — and often, the most powerful and/or fun decks require full playsets of multiple cards. The base resource for Magic — the land cards — are also assigned rarities.

And Magic rarities — while sometimes indicative of power level — can also be meaningless in terms of playability. Mythic rare cards — the cards that you maybe get three to six of per 36 packs — are unplayable in most formats. In fact, by design, only a small percentage of any given Magic set are playable in constructed formats — the formats in which you build decks out of all the available card pool.

What this means for "Arena" is that the random packs opened have a very high chance of rewarding players with absolutely nothing. This is also true in paper Magic, but then again, packs aren't supposed to be opened to build entire decks.

If you want to build that cool dragon deck, you head to the comic shop and buy the cards you want individually. That same holds true for "Magic Online," albeit in a more roundabout way.

At the current rate, the average player can hope to open a pack about every other day. Once in a blue moon, a day will provide you with enough timed missions and a lucky vault opening to provide up to three packs. That is a very rare occurrence. Eight to 10 cards every other day is about what you can expect.

What that means is that before being able to play with the deck of their choice, players have to grind for at least weeks, more likely months. New card sets come out roughly every four months, and each new set makes old decks obsolete.

This is also true in paper and in "MTGO," but in both of those there are ways to sell back or trade away old cards to recoup some costs so that they may be reapplied to newer decks. In "Arena," that's not going to be allowed, and there is no dusting mechanic.

Basically, "Arena's" economy is ripped almost straight from Hearthstone, without the considerations of the differences between the two games. It's simply non-functional at this point.

But again, "Arena" is still in beta. The economy isn't yet set in stone. The game has a long way to go before it's properly released. Plenty of features like drafts and (hopefully) other formats have yet to be introduced. There is still plenty of time for Wizards to fix the broken economy.

I and hope they do. After years of playing the dry-as-dust "Magic Online," "Arena" feels fresh, exciting and snappy. They have laid an excellent foundation, but only time will tell what they build upon it.

Will "Arena" be "Hearthstone" 2.0? Or will it finally become the "Hearthstone" competitor that Wizards has envisioned? Make that call yourself by checking out the beta at magic.wizards.com/en/mtgarena.

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Many more staff-written game reviews at stripes.com/games

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

If you arrive before the horde, the deer will greet you like friendly neighborhood pooches.

At the Wildlife Park in Tripsdrill, Germany, there are about 40 types of animals. There are caged wolves, lynx and bears, whose daily feedings are a top attraction.

There also is an impressive collection of birds of prey. During a daily demonstration, bald eagles, hawks and falcons, under the command of the park falconer, swoop through a crowd of bedazzled onlookers.

But for me, the best part of the Wildlife Park, about 25 miles north of Stuttgart, are the packs of unassuming deer. They roam free inside the wooded grounds. Some are a little wary at first of the passing people. Others are eager to be petted from the get-go.

And when you are among the first visitors, they can't get enough of you, at least if you've entered the grounds with a bag of treats that can be purchased for two euros at the entrance. The deer will gobble the pellets right out of your hand, their moist nostrils mashed into your palm.

For kids, the chance to get up close with the deer — and the more annoying little goats thrown into the mix — is a thrill.

On our first visit to the park, a frigid February day, we were early and practically alone. That meant the deer were hungry and eager to eat. On a visit a few weeks later, we were late and the deer had had their fill, but they were still friendly.

It's important to time the visit according to the feeding schedules of the larger animals.

The public feedings are at 2:30 p.m. every day except Friday, when none are scheduled. The lynx tear into their dead chickens, carefully plucking the feathers with their teeth. The cats then extract the innards with surgical precision. The wolves, meanwhile, just tear away at their meat.

The bears are playful, catching veggies tossed to them and shoveling them into their mouths. Except for the avocados, which one bear pulled apart and pitted before swallowing.

The flight demonstrations, also a must see, are at 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. daily.

In addition to the Wildlife Park, there is a connected amusement park that is a popular destination in the summer. There also are tree houses that can be rented for overnight stays.

But the wild park is worth a visit on its own.

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Twitter: @john_vandiver

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ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

From Stuttgart, head north on the A81 in the direction of Heilbronn. There are many twists and turns, so consult a maps app or plug Park-Erlebnispark Tripsdrill, 74389 Cleebronn/Tripsdrill into navigation systems.

TIMES

Daily, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

COSTS

Adults and children 12 and up, 11 euros, children between 4 and 11, 7.50 euros. Free for toddlers and infants.

FOOD

There is a small restaurant and cafe on site and a picnic area if you pack your own.

INFORMATION

Website: www.tripsdrill.de/en

— John Vandiver

DEER FRIENDS,
LASTING MEMORIESCommune with the animals at
Wildlife Park north of Stuttgart

PHOTOS BY JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

Deer roam freely at the Wildlife Park in Tripsdrill, Germany, which features about 40 different types of animals, including lynx, foxes and bears.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Estonia clings to cultural identity through song

On my last visit to Tallinn, while I was admiring the view from the terrace atop the city walls, a kindly middle-aged man approached. From a satchel on his shoulder, he pulled out a stack of music CDs, all recordings of Tallinn's famous Song Festivals. While he was eager to make a sale, my new friend was even more intent that I learn the story of how singing helped lead his country to independence.

In 2018, the scrappy Republic of Estonia marks the 100th anniversary of its founding. Having endured 200 years of czarist rule, the unraveling of the Russian Empire and the turmoil of World War I, the Estonian people faced an uphill battle when they declared their republic in 1918. They quickly adopted a democratic Western European-style government and set about building a robust economy.

But the good times didn't last—in 1940 the Soviets marched in, and Germany invaded in 1941. By the end of World War II, Estonia found itself annexed again to its neighbor, which by then had become the Soviet Union.

Thus began the tiny nation's 50-year nightmare. Estonians saw their culture swept away, with Russian replacing Estonian as the language in schools. Russians and Ukrainians were moved in, and Estonians were shipped out. Moscow would not even allow locals to wave their own flag.

But Estonians were determined to maintain their cultural identity. They had no weapons, but they created their own power—remarkably—by banding together and singing.

Song has long been a cherished Esto-

nian form of expression, a way to keep hold of their national character, especially in the face of foreign domination. As long ago as 1869 (during another era of Russian subjugation), Estonians gathered in massive choirs to sing and to celebrate their cultural uniqueness.



Rick Steves

As the USSR began to crumble, the Estonians mobilized again, using song to demand independence. In 1988, they gathered—300,000 strong, a third of the population—to sing patriotic songs at the Song Festival Grounds outside Tallinn. The next

year, the people of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia held hands to make the "Baltic Chain," a human bond that stretched 400 miles from Vilnius, Lithuania, to Riga, Latvia, to Tallinn as they sang.

This so-called Singing Revolution, peaceful and nonviolent, persisted for five years, and in the end, Estonians gained their freedom. It was a remarkable achievement: one million singing Estonians succeeded against 150 million Russian occupiers.

The spirit of song continues in Estonia. Every five years, the Song Festival Grounds welcome 25,000 singers and 100,000 spectators. The current amphitheater, built in 1959, resembles an oversized Hollywood Bowl.



Estonians enjoy a collective culture that includes sharing food and drink.

Rick Steves
Ricksteves.com

The country joined the EU and NATO in 2004, adopted the euro currency in 2011, and today feels pretty much as "Western" as its Nordic neighbors.

The capital city's Old Town remains the best-preserved medieval center in Nordic Europe. Though cruise ships have discovered Tallinn, its charm withstands the crowds. Get beyond the tacky tourism of the city's central square. In ancient townhouses and guild halls around town, several humble but worthwhile museums put Estonia's storied past in context.

The compact Museum of Estonian History condenses 11,000 years of Estonian cultural history with relative ease, focusing on the events and traditions that have shaped the country's psyche. And the Museum of Occupations, recounting Esto-

nian life under Soviet and German rule, is a reminder of the struggles faced by small countries in the shadow of empires.

Just outside town, the Estonian Open-Air Museum displays salvaged farm buildings, windmills and an old church, all transported from rural areas to a park-like setting to both save and share Estonia's traditions.

Visiting this tiny country, you can't help but feel the connection of its people to their land and heritage—and their enthusiastic pride in, and appreciation for, both their uniqueness and their hard-won freedom.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Greet Easter at a medieval market

In Germany, the days surrounding Easter are generally laid-back ones, with few activities encouraging emergence from the cocoon of family, home and hearth. But those desperate for a breath of fresh air have a pair of time-traveling outings by the Rhine from which to choose.

The Reduit, a fortress in Mainz-Kastel, holds its annual Middle Ages Easter Spectacle March 31-April 2. The usual crew of brave knights and damselfs, itinerant merchants and jesters go about their business of crafting items, selling wares and entertaining. Others out and about include fire artists, falconers, sword-wielders, dancers and horsemen. Middle Ages-inspired bands sing and play flutes, bagpipes and drums. Children can play mouse roulette or try their hand at archery.

Event hours are 11 a.m.-9 p.m. March 31, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. April 1 and 10 a.m.-7 p.m. April 2. Adults pay 9.50 euros (about \$11.70), youth enter for 6 euros, and ages five and under are free. Families pay entry for the first child only. Online: prohistory.de/event/reveuer29

The Locky-Plateau in St. Goarshausen hosts an event with a similar flair. Here too will Middle Ages folk pitch camp and entertain with juggling, a strongman's feats, concerts, knights tournaments, fire shows and lots of pre-dinner. Basket weavers, smiths, masons and



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

leather-workers play their trades, and goods from spices to hand-made knives and jewelry are sold from more than 40 stands. When hunger strikes, grilled meats and hearty fare fill rumbling bellies.

"Loreley Ostersen" runs 11 a.m.-7 p.m. daily March 31-April 2. Adult entry costs 10 euros, or 8 euros for those in convincing costumes; child's entry costs 5 euros; families pay entry for one child only and the others enter free. Online: tinyurl.com/yb-jbrv5f

Live music on the slopes

As the days grow longer and thoughts turn to spring, hitting the slopes isn't always first and foremost in a would-be vacationers' plans. Resorts rise to the challenge by planning a range of musical entertainment. Here are just some of the sounds that will echo through the Alps in the coming weeks:

Austria
Ischgl, a Tyrolean village near the Swiss border, is home to the legendary Top of the Mountain concerts in which international artists rock the Idalp open air mountain arena. In addition to concerts brokering the opening and closing of the season, there's also an Easter edition: Max Giesinger plays on April 1. Helene Fischer closes the year on April 30. Entry to both concerts is free for ski pass holders. Online: tinyurl.com/ydc6jnyy

Nassfeld, a ski resort in Carinthia by the Italian border, goes the hard way with Full Metal Mountain April 2-8. Snow-loving metalheads can enjoy 28 acts including Nazareth on the Peak Stage, Mountain Stage and Full Metal Tent. Prices for remaining packages that include lodging, ski and festival passes begin at around 600 euros based on two adults sharing accommodation. Online: full-metal-mountain.com

Giggighö, a town in the Oetz-Tignes ski resort area, takes on a club vibe during its Electric Mountain Festival April 5-6. Top European DJs are among the 16 artists rocking the slopes from 2 p.m.-11 p.m. Holders of valid Soelden ski passes enter for free; non-skiers can access the festival by gondola for 35 euros. Online: electric-mountain-festival.com

St. Anton am Arlberg, a village in Tyrol known as the birthplace of alpine skiing, hosts New Orleans meets Show April 6-8. The Mardi Gras-inspired affair features blues, jazz, funk and soul. Gary



Courtesy of prohistory.de

The Reduit, a fortress in Mainz-Kastel, Germany, hosts its Middle Ages Easter Spectacle this weekend.

Brown is set to perform Saturday night. Admission is free. Online: tinyurl.com/ydc6btdy

Mayrhofen, a resort in western Tyrol's Zillertal, throws what's billed as Europe's biggest snow and music festival, Snowbombing, running April 9-14, is known for its parties in offbeat locations from igloo village to remote alpine farmstead. This year's bill includes Liam Gallagher, Pendulum, Dizzy Rascal and dozens of DJs. A wristband for entry into all venues goes for 239 UK pounds, or about \$361. Online: snowbombing.com

Switzerland

St. Moritz, a posh resort in the Engadin Valley, hosts the Music Summit, billed as the world's highest electronic and dance music festival, April 5-8. Top DJs spin on the slopes and in town, where the partying continues

late into the night. Entry is free. Online: musicsummit.ch

Kleine Scheidegg, nestled in a steep mountain pass near the Jungfrau Mountain, offers its annual SnowpenAir concert on April 7. Amy Macdonald headlines a bill including Marc Sway and rapper Jullien. Concerts start at 10:45 a.m. Festival combitickets including train ride from Interlaken Ost and a day's ski pass for the Jungfrau ski region go for 125 Swiss francs, about \$131. Online: snowpenair.ch

Crans-Montana, a resort in Valais high above the Rhone Valley, has its Caprices Festival. Its ever-evolving format mixes electronic music with live acts. By night, the action unfolds in a gigantic tent at the foot of the ski lift. Tickets for all acts on a given day start at 59 Swiss francs. Online: caprices.ch

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe

After Hours: Italy

By SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

Hidden gem is an oft-overused term that truly fits Ristorante Pizzeria Il Pentolone, which is nearly invisible unless you know where to look.

It's tucked inside the Parco Azzurro, a gated apartment complex in Pozzuoli, west of Naples. You tell the gate guards "Il Pentolone," as if it were a secret password, and they let you enter.

At the restaurant, a friendly, elderly waiter named Gennaro seated me near a marble hearth, where the owner lit a crackling fire. Later, I learned Gennaro has worked here for decades.

The mostly bilingual menu has a list of antipasti, lighter first dishes and more elaborate main courses as well as desserts.

Pizzas range in price from 2.60 euros (\$3.20) for a margherita with cheese and basil to 9.30 euros (\$11.45) for one topped with seafood.

First, or "primi," dishes are mostly pastas, such as lasagna, shrimp linguine and macaroni with ham or sausage.

For a main course, the restaurant offers everything from grilled beef, lamb and sausages to grilled shrimp, swordfish and fried squid.

I ordered a mushroom pizza and grilled shrimp, both of which were larger than expected and delicious. The shrimp were as big as lobster tails. Gennaro served me a "special" red wine that was smooth and flavorful.

The total cost was 14.25 euros (\$17.65). I was too full to order dessert.

Gennaro showed me a plaque of a letter written by an American colonel named Dan Clark, who enjoyed many culinary adventures with his wife here in the early 1990s.

"While life is not perfect anywhere, you are in a special haven that can provide a shelter from the storms that swirl around you," Clark wrote. "Enjoy the friendships you have and let Gennaro know you appreciate his fine food and fellowship."

wyland.scott@stripes.com

RISTORANTE PIZZERIA IL PENTOLONE

Address: Via Montenuovo
Licola Patria, 138-Parco
Azzurro, Pozzuoli 80078

Parking: Inside the apartment
complex. Go to gate and tell
the guard: "Il Pentolone."

Hours: 5:30 p.m.-1 a.m. Closed
Sundays.

Prices: 5-10 euros (\$6.20-
\$12.50) for most pasta and
main dishes.

Phone: +39 (0)81-867-8063

Web: facebook.com/risto
pizzerialpentolone

— Scott Wyland



PHOTOS BY SCOTT WYLAND/Stars and Stripes

A fire crackling in a marble hearth creates a warm atmosphere while you dine at Ristorante Pizzeria Il Pentolone. Located in the Parco Azzurro apartment complex, it is off the beaten path in Pozzuoli, Italy, but well worth seeking out.



A quiet evening at the Ristorante Pizzeria Il Pentolone, which serves its variety of pizza, seafood, meat dishes and desserts amid festive yet classy decor.

This tomato soup couldn't be easier

By BECKY KRISTAL
The Washington Post

Summer is for gazpacho — that zippy, no-cook soup made with peak-season tomatoes — but when I want tomato soup at any other time of year, I turn to this fast, pantry-friendly option. It's almost as easy as cracking open a can of Campbell's.

The soup boasts a creamy texture without any dairy. That smoothness is created when the bread and olive oil emulsify in the blender with the other ingredients.

Of course, tomato soup almost demands cheese to go along with it, which is why I wanted to gussy up the soup recipe just a little bit. You could certainly make a grilled cheese for dipping. Or, you could take a hands-off, carb-light approach and make melted-cheese thins that bake while the soup warms in the pan.

This soup is reason enough to keep a can of tomatoes around, so you'll always be just one blender button away from a bowl of bliss.

FAST BLENDER TOMATO SOUP WITH CHEESE CRISPS

Servings: 4 (makes 4 cups)

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 clove garlic
- 1/2 cup chopped onion (from 1/2 medium yellow or white onion)
- 1 slice white or whole-wheat bread (crusts removed), torn into 1-inch pieces
- 28 ounces canned, no-salt-added whole peeled tomatoes, plus their juices
- 1 cup no-salt-added vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon dried herbs, such as a mix of basil and oregano
- 4 ounces Gruyere cheese or Parmigiano-Reggiano, finely grated
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 300 degrees.

Combine the oil, garlic, onion, bread pieces, the tomatoes and their juices, the broth and dried herbs in a blender; begin to blend on low, then gradually increase to high until pureed and smooth.

Pour into a medium saucepan; cook over medium-low heat for 20 minutes, stirring a few times.

While the soup is heating, make the "grilled cheese." Tricli: Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone liner. Divide the grated cheese into four equal portions, and pile each on the sheet, leaving at least 2 inches between them. Bake (middle rack) until flat, lightly golden brown all over and crisp at the edges, 12 to 14 minutes. Let cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes, then use a metal spatula to carefully transfer them to a plate to cool completely.

Once the soup is heated through, taste, and season with salt and pepper, as needed. Serve warm, and top each with a frico.



STACY ZARIN GOLDBERG/For The Washington Post

Fast Blender Tomato Soup With Cheese Crisps is simple, yet slightly fancy as well.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



MARY WINSTON NICKLIN/AP

Traditional Cape Verdean boats, painted in bright colors, on the beach in Mindelo. The Atlantic archipelago known as Cape Verde is 350 miles off the coast of Senegal. One of the 10 islands in the former Portuguese colony is uninhabited.

Islands in harmony

Former Portuguese colony Cape Verde a beautiful example of humans and nature living in balance

BY MARY WINSTON NICKLIN
Special to The Washington Post

A bearded fellow in flip-flops ambles into the bar. Is this the mountain guide the bartender has called for us? My sister and I exchange puzzled glances. Casually spreading a creased island map across a table, he speaks—in French. He's a multilingual guide, but English doesn't happen to be one of his five languages.

It was dusk when we arrived at Ponta do Sol—the far northern end of an island at the westernmost edge of the Atlantic archipelago known as Cape Verde. Specks scattered in the ocean 350 miles off the coast of Senegal, nine of the 10 islands in the former Portuguese colony are inhabited. Our journey to the island of Santo Antao required a flight from Portugal to the island of Sao Vicente, followed by a ferry across the choppy currents to the town of Porto Novo, from where we piled into a collective (a shared taxi) that bounced us to the end of the road: a town of cobblestone streets and sherbet-colored houses clinging to cliffs facing the furious Atlantic Ocean.

But now, at our friendly guesthouse, Kasa Tambla, all the guides are booked for hiking excursions into the Paul

Valley—a verdant pilgrimage spot for hikers.

"Go ask at the bar up the street," we are told.

And so do we happen to meet the French-speaking Bebeto, as he tells us to call him. Shrugging, as I can always translate from French to English for my sister, I agree to a price and a departure time the following morning.

At the beachfront, the sun burns bright orange as it drops into the water. We gaze at the craggy mountains rising from the ocean, sipping shots of grogue, the local spirit made from sugar cane.

"On the house!" the waiter grins. We tuck into tasty morsels of fish, pulled from the water a few hours earlier, as musicians sit down to play, their tunes electrified by the energy of an Atlantic storm.

On the tour

In the morning, Bebeto is right on time. Emmy and I refill water bottles from the dispensers offered by the eco-conscious guesthouse. Then we climb into Bebeto's red pickup truck for a drive along the old cobbled road.

"Before these islands were discovered by the Portuguese in the mid-15th century, this was completely virgin land," Bebeto explains. Much like the Galapagos, these isolated volcanic

islands developed their own plant and animal life, with seeds carried from the African continent on the Saharan trade winds. When Charles Darwin arrived here in 1831, awestruck by the islands' unique geography, vegetation and animal species, he wrote, "It has been for me a glorious day, like giving sight to a blind man's eyes."

Bebeto points emphatically out the window at the most interesting tree I've ever seen: a flat, spiky canopy spread horizontally atop a gnarled trunk, standing sentry among the sugar cane stalks. The dragon tree is ancient. Resistant to drought, this endemic species is considered a symbolic national monument, standing witness to centuries of history. Resilient, like the Cape Verdeans themselves.

Bebeto stops the truck and we set out on the loose pebble path used by peasants ascending the Paul Valley. It feels like the edge of the Earth, we decide, but Cape Verde actually has a strategic position in the middle of it all. The Portuguese identified it as the Atlantic's crossroads, an anchor between Europe, Africa and South America. Favorable wind patterns and ocean currents meant that Cape Verde played an important role in maritime history—and a sinister one, at the heart of the infamous transatlantic slave trade.

Ships stopped to pick up supplies and pay customs fees. Later, Cape Verde became a port of call for whaling ships, then ocean liners needing to stock up on coal, salt and water.

Uninhabited when discovered, the islands served as a blank slate for Portuguese colonialists—both geographically and culturally. The great mariners had ventured to all corners of the Earth, carrying back an incredible variety of plants. The settlers imported edibles such as papaya and sugar cane, along with agricultural methods including irrigation systems developed on mountainous Madeira. The hybrid population represents a unique melting pot descended from original Portuguese settlers, Africans from Gambia and Senegal, Sephardic Jews fleeing persecution, and Moors of Arabic descent. There's no better symbol of this melange than the Kriolu language, which developed as a mix of African and European vocabulary, with some archaic words not used in the Portuguese vernacular for centuries.

But Cape Verde was an unsustainable place. The Verde—or green—in Cape Verde is a misnomer, considering the bleached and rain-parched colors of many of the islands. Serious drought and barren soil led to waves of emigration throughout history. The Cape Verdean diaspora means that more citizens live abroad than in the country itself. (The largest population is in the United States, as many seafaring Cape Verdeans left to work on New England whaling ships.) And so the mournful ballads, known as morna, sung by the great chanteuse Cesaria Evora are infused with longing for those who departed and for the land left behind.

Water remains scarce in Cape Verde, with modern desalination plants supplying much of the potable water. The exception is Santo Antao, where we are. This is the greenest of the islands, a fertile paradise sprinkled with rainfall.

As we walk up the Paul Valley, we marvel at the agricultural bounty. Terraced hillsides are planted with coffee, coconut, avocado, manioc, sugar cane, mango, banana and breadfruit crops. Bebeto shows us how farmers painstakingly plant in mountain streams; taro plants are cultivated in the rushing water like rice. Small stone walls are constructed to prevent erosion and to pool the water flow. The harvest takes place in August before the rains wash out the stream beds. Every year, workers rebuild the walls, stone by stone.

Bebeto jumps into a stream to show us how the plants are grown; he ushers us inside a friend's house to drink locally grown coffee; he picks blossoms to thread into a colorful bouquet, which he presents with a smile. We are welcomed inside traditional thatched dwellings perched at dizzying heights above the valley, adorned with simple Catholic shrines. We have never discussed lunch and end up feasting on fried chicken. When I snack on a banana later, Bebeto won't let me throw away the peel; he saves it for a goat.

He tells us that two wind turbines supply 60 percent of the island's energy. Five villages on the island's west side are solar-powered, with more solar projects on the horizon.

The higher we ascend, the more mind-blowing the views. We are bowled over by the grandeur. The canyons appear as deep lush grooves, a wrinkled green carpet cloaking the volcanic peaks.

Evora sang of the Paul Valley as the "Jardin Prometido"—the "promised garden" where the "river is flowing," "water is falling" and "hope is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

FROM PAGE 30

blossoming." And what we see is a harmonious cohabitation between humankind and nature. We salute the workers we pass, and Bebetto describes a tilled terrace as a "work of art."

Not until much later in the day do we encounter another set of hikers. Clad in Patagonia outdoor gear, the tanned and toned guide beams at Bebetto, reaching out to shake his hand. "He's the best guide on the island!" he tells us. There, on the top of a mountain-top gazing at the mar azul, or blue sea, that Evora sang so passionately about, we realize that we had lucked into the very best. It is a stroke of serendipity that marks the best travel adventures.

Another view

Later in the week, Bebetto drives us to the ferry, taking the longer panoramic route over the mountains. The Estrada de Corda is epic. Following a steep ridge, the cobble road reaches a vertiginous altitude. We marvel at the deep volcanic craters circled by jagged peaks. Spiky acacia plants sprout from sheer rock cliffs. The mountains are laced with a green so luminous that it's almost fluorescent. Forged by fire and successive lava flows, the rocks were later carved by water. There's something primordial about it, like we're witnessing geological creation in real time.

The road climbs into the clouds. The temperatures are cooler, the soil planted with fragrant pines. Reforestation has helped create a distinctive climate. Bebetto tells us that tourism on Santo Antao began only 18 years ago. As we near the ferry terminal, Bebetto points out the aridity of the island's southern side, where the rains are blocked by the mountain peaks. One of our reggae friends says with a laugh, "The only things growing here are acacia trees and unemployment."

Our return flight is from Sal, where transatlantic flights used to refuse decades before planes could traverse very long distances. Sal is a spit of sand and barren rock, but it's the country's de facto tourism capital.

While Santo Antao is gloriously green and Sao Vicente is the music-marinated culture capital, Sal is all about fun in the sun. It has fine sandy beaches, world-renowned kiteboarding, and vibrant nightlife in the town of Santa Maria.

But it's jarring to see the sheer number of all-inclusive resorts, operated by international hotel chains and kitted out with sprawling infinity pools. Mass tourism to Sal is soaring, with the British press calling Cape Verde "the next Canaries."

From the terrace of our guesthouse, Emmy and I imbibe the passion fruit punch we had purchased at the artisanal grogue factory in the Paul Valley. We remember the two poignant words Bebetto had said about Sal: "No water."

Sal offers a marked contrast with Santo Antao, where sustainable tourism has taken root and has the opportunity to flourish, bringing with it jobs. Cape Verde — a promising young country with high literacy and a stable democracy — has announced plans to run entirely on renewable energy by the year 2025. Can tourism follow suit?

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www.stripes.com

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific



PHOTOS BY LEON COOK/Stars and Stripes

The Thunder Dolphin passes through a cutout in a department store, above. The ride's first drop, right, is a 218-foot, 80-degree plunge, at Tokyo Dome City Attractions in the heart of Tokyo.

Taking the plunge

Coaster just one of the rides at Tokyo Dome City

By LEON COOK
Stars and Stripes

Never underestimate the Thunder Dolphin.

It might be named for a friendly sea mammal, but a ride on this roller coaster at the Tokyo Dome City theme park will set your heart racing.

The ride is confined to a relatively small space in the heart of Tokyo, but that only seems to have inspired its creators to ramp up the excitement.

The Thunder Dolphin carries 24 riders up a 45-degree slope to a height of 262 feet, then plunges down a 218-foot, 80-degree incline at 81 mph.

From there, it soars to the top of the Spa LaQua department store and through a cutout in the building itself. After passing through the center of the park's Ferris wheel, the track curves around and parallels itself, passing again over the top of the shopping center and right next to a section that riders had zoomed past less than a minute before.

The ride takes only a minute and a half and doesn't go far — just two laps around the park — but it's a thrilling 90 seconds.

My favorite part of the ride was going through the side of the department store. The curves were so sharply banked that I felt like I was sideways. I was also impressed with the first drop, one of the steepest plunges I've taken.

However, the price is nearly as steep at 1,030 yen (about \$10) a ride. Day passes for unlimited rides at any attraction in the park cost 3,900 yen.

During weekends, you might have to wait for a ride on the Thunder Dolphin, which runs about once every 5 minutes while staff check and double-check restraints and safety devices. Passes to skip the line are available for 520 yen.

The rest of the park has a good variety of family-friendly and more intense thrill rides, including a log flume, swinging ship and a carousel. There's also a bowling alley and a mind-boggling variety

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

Tokyo Dome City is next to Korakuen subway station on the Marunouchi and Namboku lines, and Suidobashi Station on the Chuo line.

TIMES

Open daily, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

COSTS

Admission to the park is free. Thunder Dolphin costs 1,030 yen per ride. Guests can purchase a pass for unlimited rides for 3,900 yen.

FOOD

Tokyo Dome City has 70 restaurants, ranging from Japanese to Western cuisine.

INFORMATION

81-3-5800-9999, www.tokyo-dome.co.jp/en/tourists/attractions

— Leon Cook

of restaurants — the Tokyo Dome City website lists 70.

The Ferris wheel that the Thunder Dolphin passes through — known as Big O — is the park's other main attraction. Instead of the traditional hub-and-spoke arrangement, its metal and glass pods are attached to a rotating rail. It lifts riders 200 feet in the air and certain cars are equipped with karaoke machines.

Views from the top are incredible, and watching the Thunder Dolphin tearing by is more impressive from Big O than from the roller coaster itself.

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The Thunder Dolphin carries 24 riders up a 45-degree slope to a height of 262 feet, then plunges down a 218-foot, 80-degree incline at 81 mph.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Pacific



Chicken salad at Joy Cook, a restaurant outside the pedestrian gate at Camp Humphreys, South Korea.

After Hours: Korea

By KIM GAMEL
Stars and Stripes

Joy Cook, a recently renovated restaurant just outside Camp Humphreys, offers a tasty array of Italian food with a smattering of Korean dishes.

Start by choosing from pastas, spaghetti, linguine, fettuccini, farfalle, cappellini, conchiglie, penne and fusilli. Then pick a sauce and meat or seafood. That will determine the price.

There's also oven-baked lasagna, chicken parmesan and several types of risotto.

The main dishes come with garlic bread, and extra can be ordered for less than \$1. Appetizers include salads, bruschetta and, of course, dumplings.

The menu is hardly fusion. But just like an Italian restaurant in the United States might have a cheeseburger on the menu, Joy Cook has bulgogi and sweet-and-sour pork or chicken.

Appetizers range from 4,500 to 5,900 won (\$4.50 to \$6), while main dishes cost between 8,400 and 13,900 won (\$8.40 to \$13.90).

The restaurant has a spacious, family-friendly atmosphere with quirky figurines as decoration. It's conveniently located a short walk to the left after exiting the Humphreys pedestrian gate in the Anjeong-ri area, and is easily recognizable by the welcoming chef and hockey statues outside. The Army garrison has seen an explosion of on-post restaurants as its population swells with the relocation of most U.S. forces south of Seoul. But so have the communities outside.

Hoping to draw more of the growing business, Joy Cook, which has been in business since 2003, knocked down some walls and created a more open space lined with a well-stocked bar.

Alcoholic beverages are reasonably priced at about 6,000 won (\$6) for cocktails and 5,000 to 10,000 won (\$5 to \$10) for a glass of wine or beer.

The restaurant also stays open an extra half-hour, until 9:30 p.m., for takeout only.

gamel.kim@stripes.com
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PHOTOS BY KIM GAMEL/Stars and Stripes

The exterior of Joy Cook. The family-friendly restaurant serves mostly Italian dishes, but has a few Korean options as well.



A baker statue welcomes diners to Joy Cook and provides a peek at what's on the menu.

JOY COOK

Location: 125-1, Anjeong-sunhwan-ro, Paengseong-eup, Pyeongtaek.

Hours: Open daily from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. for table service and until 9:30 p.m. for takeout.

Prices: Appetizers range from 4,500 to 5,900 won (\$4.50 to \$6). Main dishes range from 8,400 to 13,900 won (\$8.40 to \$13.90). Beverages range from 3,000 won (\$3) for soft drinks and 5,000 to 10,000 won for a glass of wine or beer. Wine is also sold by the bottle.

Dress: Casual

Directions: From Camp Humphreys, it's a short walk to the left of the pedestrian gate or a short drive to the left of the Anjeong-ri gate for vehicles.

Information: 631-691-4922

Beginner cooks, these cashews are just for you

By JENNIFER FARLEY
Special to The Washington Post

Growing up, it never occurred to me that cooking was something you had to learn.

I guess I thought that some people simply had the right instincts, like musical or artistic prodigies. They just picked up the knife and knew how to masterfully dice an onion.

That wasn't me, and chances are it's not you, either.

For years, I just assumed I was a bad cook and made little effort to improve. But once I was out of college and living on my own, I desperately wanted to take my culinary skills to the next level.

For as long as I can remember, I've always loved food.

Going out to restaurants and trying new cuisines brings me pure joy.

At a certain point, I realized I wanted to be able to create that same excitement in my own kitchen, and I wanted to be able to share it with others. Yet I had no idea where to begin, and everything from chopping vegetables to searing meat left me in a panic.

Without basic kitchen skills, even the most simple tasks can seem incredibly daunting.

It's very satisfying to cook a delicious meal for yourself. Being able to share that food with others makes the experience even more enjoyable.



JENNIFER FARLEY/For The Washington Post

Toasted Salt-and-Pepper Cashews are easy and quick.

However, if you're missing those essential kitchen skills and are lacking confidence, cooking for others can be stressful or downright scary.

I graduated from L'Academie de Cuisine, and over the past eight years, I've worked as a line cook, pastry chef and cooking instructor. I'm now a full-time recipe developer and food photographer.

But even now, I can remember how frustrating it was to read recipes and not understand how to execute them (or to think I understood until my kitchen was on fire). I want to help you step out of your comfort zone in the kitchen, just as I stepped out of mine. To start, here's an easy toasted cashew recipe that comes together in minutes.

And you don't have to go to cooking school to do it.

TOASTED SALT-AND-PEPPER CASHES

Six servings (makes about 1½ cups)

You can play around with the spices, but this version demonstrates how much flavor you can coax out of such basic ingredients. The pepper gives these cashews a real kick without being overpowering.

HANDS-ON TIME: 8 minutes

COOK TIME: 7 minutes

EQUIPMENT: Skillet, spatula, slotted spoon, medium bowl

Ingredients:

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1½ cups raw whole cashews
1½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat for about 1 minute. Add the cashews and stir to coat.

Cook for 4 to 6 minutes, stirring frequently with a spatula, until the cashews are golden brown and fragrant.

Line a plate with paper towel. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the nuts to the plate to drain; do not pat them dry.

While the cashews are still hot, transfer them to a medium bowl and toss with the salt and pepper. Serve hot, warm or at room temperature.



KATHERINE FREY/The Washington Post

Recipe developer and food photographer Jennifer Farley works on roasted Salt-and-Pepper Cashews.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

FROM MALE ANATOMY TO MARZIPAN, EXPLORE THESE

QUIRRY MUSEUMS

Sure, you'll be enlightened by visits to the Louvre in Paris, the British Museum in London and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. But for an atypical take on the human experience, check out these unusual museums and their oddball collections. | By KATHERINE RODEGHIER/*Chicago Tribune*

National Cookie Cutter Historical Museum

Joplin, Mo.

In many kitchens, the humble cookie cutter is relegated to the back of a cabinet until Christmastime, but it takes center stage all year in a section of the Joplin Museum Complex.

These cute kitchen utensils fill 11 display cases tracing their history. Europeans used hand-carved wooden molds to press dough into a variety of shapes, and when they emigrated to the U.S. they brought their molds with them. Tinsmiths created the first American-made cookie cutters in the 1700s. These were followed by cutters made of aluminum and then, when metal was scarce during World War II, plastic. Companies gave away free cutters as an incentive to buy their baking products.

Icelandic Phallogical Museum

Reykjavik, Iceland

This storefront museum in the major downtown shopping area displays the male reproductive organ of almost every land and sea mammal in Iceland — and several more from outside this northern island nation.

It devotes itself to phallogogy, the scientific study of the male member, and includes 282 specimens from 93 species of animals, most of them preserved in jars of formaldehyde or dried and displayed on the wall or in glass cases. The smallest, the baculum (penis bone) of a hamster, measures 0.08 of an inch and must be viewed with a magnifying glass, while the largest, from a blue whale, spans 67 inches — and that's just the tip. Other animals represented in the collection include an African elephant, polar bear, seal, mouse, walrus, moose, giraffe and weasel. Five human donations have been pledged by men from Germany, England and the U.S. upon their deaths.

The museum's founder, historian Sigurdur Hjartarson, says his interest in phallogogy began when he married a pizelle — a dried bull's penis made into a whip — while on summer vacation in the Icelandic countryside. Later, as headmaster of a secondary school, he was given specimens from a nearby whaling station, initially as a joke. His collection grew and was passed to his son, now the curator of the museum that draws more than 12,000 people a year.

Cell Block 7 Prison Museum

Jackson, Mich.

When doors clang shut in this museum, visitors might feel a tingle down their spines, imagining what it would be like to be imprisoned in a 10-by-6-foot cell.

Cell Block 7 lies on active prison grounds in Jackson, Mich., but the only inmates visitors see are an occasional glimpse through the fence to the prison yard. Instead, they learn about life behind bars in what once was the world's largest walled prison, housing more than 5,000 inmates. It opened in 1934, and Cell Block 7, with five tiers of cells, was an active part of the penitentiary until 2007. Assisted-suicide doctor Jack Kevorkian spent his first day in prison here, and Detroit Tigers baseball player Ron LeFlore was discovered while playing in the prison's baseball league.

On self-guided tours, visitors see how Michigan's most hardened criminals attempted to escape by tunneling under walls. One even lifted off in a helicopter. They learn about prison riots, including one in 1952 that lasted five days with 2,600 inmates holding nine guards hostage. It inspired the film "Riot in Cell Block 11." Other movies filmed here include "Stone" with Robert De Niro and "Conviction" with Hilary Swank. Another, "Old Man and the Gun," is set for release this year with Robert Redford in the title role.



Courtesy of International Spy Museum

The Aston Martin DB5 first appeared in the 1964 James Bond thriller "Goldfinger."

International Spy Museum

Washington, D.C.

James Bond wannabes get a taste of spycraft at the only public museum in the nation dedicated to espionage.

The "School for Spies" exhibit contains more than 200 artifacts, including a CIA disguise kit and a buttonhole camera on a coat worn by KGB operatives. Historical displays detail the undercover work of purported (and executed) spy Mata Hari, cookbook author

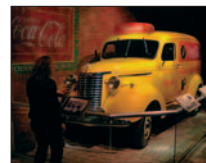
Julia Child and film director John Ford. A special exhibit chronicles 50 years of James Bond villains. In two immersive experiences, participants can try to locate a missing nuclear device and go on a GPS-based outdoor walking mission. The museum store stocks disguise kits, spy toys and books.

In the fall, the museum is scheduled to move from its current location in the Penn Quarter to a building at L'Enfant Plaza, where it will more than double its floor space.



KATHERINE RODEGHIER/Chicago Tribune

Cookie cutters in numerous shapes, sizes and colors occupy a section of a museum complex in Joplin, Mo. Displays in the National Cookie Cutter Historical Museum trace the story of cookie cutters from Europe to America.



KATHERINE RODEGHIER/Chicago Tribune

This vintage Coca-Cola delivery truck was delivered to the museum from Argentina.

World of Coca-Cola

Atlanta, Ga.

At this downtown attraction, visitors can sample more than 100 of the company's most popular beverages from around the globe, including Inca Kola, a sweet, fruity yellow drink created in Peru in 1935; Biba Candy Pine-Nut, an African beverage with pineapple and coconut flavors; and Thums Up, the strong, top-selling drink of India.

The Coca-Cola experience includes a visit to The Vault, where the secret formula is kept, along with displays on its origins, myths and legends. Galleries in The Milestones section house exhibits on the history of Coke, featuring a 19th-century soda fountain similar to the one where the drink was first served and a 1939 Chevrolet truck used to deliver the product in Argentina. Other attractions include a 4-D (multi-sensory) movie, Coca-Cola TV ads from around the world, a peek at the bottling process, and a chance to have a photo taken with the Coca-Cola polar bear.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35



KATHERINE RODEGHIER/Chicago Tribune

Five tiers of cells once held prisoners in Jackson, Mich. Cell Block 7 Prison Museum, located on active prison grounds, tells the story of life behind bars.

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE



KATHERINE RODGHIEN/Chicago Tribune

Visitors to Hocking Hills Regional Welcome Center can view 3,450 pencil sharpeners.

FROM PAGE 34

Paul A. Johnson Pencil Sharpener Museum

Logan, Ohio

What started off as a hobby for a retired minister has become a curiosity at the Hocking Hills Regional Welcome Center.

The Rev. Paul A. Johnson began collecting pencil sharpeners more than 25 years ago, after his wife gave him two shaped like metal toy cars as Christmas gifts. The collection grew to 3,450 sharpeners in a variety of shapes and themes. Some celebrate the holidays, while others replicate animals — horses, cats, dogs. Some are shaped like food, some like symbols of the zodiac. There are sharpeners representing popular travel destinations, such as Disneyland and Spain, and some devoted to history and religion.

After Johnson's death, the tiny museum building was moved on a flatbed truck from the Johnsons' property to the front garden of the welcome center, where visitors to the Hocking Hills region stop in for tourist information. The sharpeners were carefully unpacked and placed on shelves in their original positions.



PHOTOS BY THE MIAMI HERALD/TNS

Left: A lion statue guards the north entrance to Neptune Memorial Reef, a 16-acre city of the dead located three miles off Key Biscayne in Miami.

Above: An ashes container in the shape of a star is on display at a Neptune Memorial Reef event to announce the enlargement of the underwater mausoleum.

When these people say you'll be
sleeping
with **the fishes,**
they're not kidding

Neptune Memorial Reef is an underwater resting place

BY LINDA ROBERTSON
Miami Herald

You can sleep with the fishes. By choice.

It's the only way to go for those who want to return to the sea whence we came.

Miami's Neptune Memorial Reef, a final resting place like no other, is expanding. One day, the cremated remains of 250,000 souls will be tended by angelfish, guarded by moray eels and visited by scuba divers in a scenic 16-acre city of the dead three miles off Key Biscayne.

"My mom always wanted waterfront property and now she's got the best," said John Hink, whose 86-year-old mother, Edith Hink, passed away in 2008. Her remains were placed in a Greek column at the reef and her family of avid divers regularly swims down to pay their respects. "It's a stunningly beautiful, uplifting, meditative place."

When the elder Hink was in hospice care, she decided she did not want to be buried six feet underground. She wanted to go 40 feet under water. She's among 600 deceased people whose ashes have been placed in various types of cement molds used to build the artificial reef that is now home to 80 species of fish and corals.

"We told her, 'Dolphins will be swimming around you,' and she said, 'That's where I want to be,' and we said, 'We'll join you, eventually,'" said Vicki Hink, Edith's daughter-in-law. "It's a life for a life. You're creating a living reef."

Neptune Memorial Reef opened at the designated artificial reef site in 2007. The design theme at the outset was the Lost City of Atlantis. There's an entrance, archways, columns, a giant globe, lions, statuary. Marine life — including a rare type of sea urchin — has attached itself to the structures and is thriving. Parrotfish, black beauties and green morays are among the residents.

"It's not really a cemetery and it's not really a mausoleum," said Jim Hutslar, Neptune operations director. "It's a tribute reef."

As Neptune launches the next phase of its master plan — expanding from less than an acre to its original EPA, NOAA and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission permitted size of 16 acres — customers can choose from 11 types of molds with inscribed copper plaques to hold their ashes, including brain coral, seashell, starfish, turtle and stingray. A turtle named Crush and rays named Desi and Lucy live on the reef. A mermaid mold is on the drawing board.

The cost of a single placement, in which ashes are mixed with cement into the mold, starts at \$1,999. Neptune also offers "Scatter at Sea" options for as low as \$595, which includes scattering ashes in open water above the reef with a plaque placed on the reef. It's less expensive than a traditional burial in a casket that can cost upwards of \$5,000.

"We have a lot of couples, and you can have a couple and a pet in one placement," said Melissa Pitalo, market director for SCI Funeral Services, Neptune's parent company, which runs 2,500 funeral homes and crematories.

"If a family wants to be together, you can purchase a reserved space ahead of need. We have a family of five that died together in a car crash. We have a lot of Navy and Marine veterans. Boaters, fishermen, people who love the ocean, people who love the outdoors. We have people from Kansas who tell us, 'My dad loved the beach.'"

Pitalo cited Florida's cremation rate of 60 percent, which has doubled in the past 20 years. "Cremation is a choice that's trending upward," she said. "In the case of Neptune, when you go out on the water to celebrate a life, it's extremely beautiful and tranquil. It's green, it's eco-friendly, it's giving back to the earth."

"Families return and see coral growing and know that their loved one is the foundation of the reef."

Neptune is a popular dive spot, and Hutslar wants to construct a dive platform for instructors. Boats can tie up to four moorings; anchoring and spearfishing are prohibited.

The Hink family of Fort Lauderdale has 14 places reserved in a column for that when they'll never need to surface for air.

"With cremation, you can plan your memorial service and it's a joyful way to say goodbye. You don't have to pick a coffin and lower it into the ground within a few days when you're in a distressed mode," Vicki Hink said.

"I think cremation is more appropriate today and people are not as rigid about religion. You go by these cemeteries, see all the headstones. We don't have much land to spare."



KATHERINE RODGHIEN/Chicago Tribune

Twelve life-size marzipan figures are on display at the museum.

Marzipan Museum

Lubeck, Germany

This northern German city enjoys a reputation for producing some of the world's finest marzipan. Nowhere is it more celebrated than at Niederegger, a confectioner that has been turning out the almond and sugar sweet since 1806.

Upstairs from the store and cafe stand a dozen life-size marzipan mannequins styled as figures from Lubeck's history, along with a marzipan model ship and Faberge-like eggs. Exhibits and a video explain the history of marzipan and how it's made. Originally from the Middle East, it was carried home by Crusaders in boxes called mataban. Today, shoppers can choose from the store's 300 varieties of marzipan.

WEEKEND: MUSIC



'Hip-hop is the new punk rock'

Jack White on which 'Star Trek' captain he's like in the studio and why rap helps feed his bold new sound on 'Boarding House Reach'

By MIKAEL WOOD
Los Angeles Times

Jack White performs at Farm Aid '14 in Raleigh, N.C., on Sept. 13, 2014. White, long rock's crankiest revivalist, has embraced elements of modern hip-hop on his new album.

TNS

Jack White has been obsessed with the number three for as long as he can remember.

It famously animated his platinum-selling blues-punk band, the White Stripes, which he built around three instruments: voice, guitar, drums. And it's a symbolic cornerstone of his Nashville record label, Third Man Records, where employees wear uniforms of yellow, black and white.

Given his fixation, you'd expect that if there were one thing in current pop music to excite White, it would be the so-called triplet flow popularized by hip-hop trio Migos (and emulated by countless recent rappers).

White himself would expect it. But no.

"As much as I love the number three, I don't think the triplet cadence is that interesting," he said of the rhyming pattern in hits such as Migos' "Bad and Boujee" and Cardi B's "Bodak Yellow." "I do think it's a cool notion," although he prefers a more varied, freewheeling delivery.

The real surprise here might be that White, 42, is paying enough attention to hip-hop to have an opinion.

For years, the singer and guitarist has been known as rock's crankiest revivalist — the guy most likely to dismiss rap in his defense of the Way Things Used to Be.

But with his bold new solo album he's happily disrupting that caricature.

To make the just-released "Boarding House Reach," White sought musicians who've played with the likes of Kendrick Lamar and Kanye West. Together they developed a jumpy, fragmented sound that emphasizes texture and rhythm over the neat song structures with which White built his audience.

Listen to "Corporation," which is basically an extended funk vamp with squalling electric guitar. Or "Ice Station Zebra," a tempo-shifting ditty in which White sing-speaks — we may as well call it rapping — about how "everyone creating is a member of the family / Passing down genes and ideas in harmony."

Even "Over and Over and Over," one of the album's singles, has less to do with a catchy chorus than with all the freaky ways White can rephrase the song's pummeling central riff.

If it's a rock song, it plays like its own remix — Led Zeppelin as channeled by DJ Premier.

"Hip-hop is the new punk rock," White said over drinks in downtown Los Angeles, a few hours before he played a sold-out show at the Mayan Theater. He was dressed, as he often is, in all black before he took a French martini, which he downed in four gulps.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

FROM PAGE 36

"Rappers have the dangerous edge of music now — what I would consider the closest thing to that stuff you might not want your parents to know you're listening to."

Dangerous or not, hip-hop is also hugely popular, and has been for decades. Last year, according to Nielsen Music, rap overtook rock for the first time as America's most-listened-to genre. So you could say White is merely following trends, switching up his style to avoid looking like a dinosaur.

Except he knows this new collection of music is precisely the opposite of what many of his fans were hoping for. Reviews of the album have been mixed, while the crowd at the Mayan received "Corporation" with a fraction of the enthusiasm it had for the White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army." "I hear a lot of talk about people listening to this album, saying, 'You don't even actually hear a song till you get to 'Over and Over and Over,'" White said. "What they're really saying is, 'I'm not hearing a song that I want from Jack White until 'Over and Over and Over.' They want me to write songs like I did on 'Elephant,'" he continued, referring to the White Stripes' 2003 disc.

The idea didn't excite him. His ambition was to conjure something of the disjointed quality of life in 2018, for which he said hip-hop's attack is better geared than a more traditional roots-music approach.

Close listeners are aware that he's been inching in this direction for years — on 2014's Grammy-winning "Lazaretto" and on the White Stripes' perfectly titled "Icky Thump," which came out in 2007 before the band broke up.

Back then, White had reservations about being associated with hip-hop, not least because he wanted to put some distance between himself and brutish rap-rock acts like Limp Bizkit.

Today, though, he seems eager to be part of a conversation that includes Nicki Minaj (whose song "Only" is a favorite of White's) and Lamar's "Black Panther" soundtrack ("Those are some weird songs," he said, clearly awed).

As a result, "Boarding House Reach" feels newly modern in its eclecticism, and also in the way he opens the music to other voices, including Nashville's gospel group the McCrary Sisters and Australia's eccentric C.W. Stoneking, who delivers a spoken-word passage in "Abulia and Akrasia." Never before has White seemed less excited by the role of patriarchal rock god.

There are two songs on this album that I don't play any instruments on," he said. "That's great."

To find some of the players, White inspected YouTube concert clips. "I'd literally point and say, 'Can we find out who this guy is?'" he recalled. He was searching for musicians capable of replicating in real time what hip-hop producers do in the studio. Once he found them, he convened two separate groups, one in New York and one in L.A., and started jamming.

Asked what kind of license he gave his collaborators, White invoked "Star Trek: The Next Generation." "It wasn't like the old 'Star Trek,' where there was this hero, Capt. Kirk, who told everybody what to do," he explained. "Capt. Picard said, 'Someone give me options.' That's the way to be the captain of a ship."

White said he no longer enjoys the experience that maybe one day he'll



Jack White

Boarding House Reach
(Third Man/Columbia)

Jack White's "Boarding House Reach" sounds crazy on paper.

His third solo album assembles bits of rock, blues, jazz, funk, synth pop, prog rock, country and spoken word into fascinating experiments that sound like Kanye West crossed with Radiohead or Merle Haggard joining Depeche Mode or, you know, ludicrous. However, White makes nearly all of it work. He's created ambition you can dance to, spoken word poetry that rocks.

In other words, White is crazy like a fox.

Maybe it's no surprise that the guy who helped Beyoncé go country or Loretta Lynn find a hard-rocking comeback has decided to do some genre-crossing of his own.

That doesn't come close to explaining "Corporation," which starts out as a funk jam studded with Led Zeppelin-like riffs for three minutes before flowing into a spoken-word rant. "I'm thinking about starting a corporation," White says like a preacher at Sunday services. "Who's with me? Nowadays, that's how you get adulat[ion]."

In "Ice Station Zero," he moves from rapping like Will Smith in "Parents Just Don't Understand" to something more Beck-like as he declares, "The players and the cynics will be thinking it's hard, but if you rewind the tape, we're all copying God," as he preaches against labeling art.

Even when White scales back, he is still pushing boundaries. "What's Done Is Done" seems like a country weeper, but it's layered over wobbly synths that give it a dreamlike quality, as it devolves into a murder-ous threat. "Connected by Love" might sound traditional in comparison, but its intricacies still make it drift from latter-day White Stripes to a bit of Leonard Cohen-like call-and-response.

In the hands of a lesser musician, all these ambitions would be impossible to corral, but White bends them to his will, building "Boarding House Reach" into something uniquely beautiful.

— Glenn Gamboa
Newsday

get into the songwriting-by-committee that underpins the Top 40 — at least if he can get over his worry that pro writers likely show up to sessions "talking about how much percentage of the publishing they're going to get."

For now, he feels insulated from the hard industrial realities of a record business desperate for surefire hits. His success allows him to make the music he wants to make, and when he does write with someone else, it's someone at an equal level

of self-determination — Beyoncé, for instance, with whom he created "Don't Hurt Yourself," from her 2016 album "Lemonade."

For White, the compromise is never about art; it has to do with his willingness to promote what he's done.

"Do you want to sell 100,000 copies or 500,000 copies?" he said. "That's when you have to make decisions about whether to sit down and do this interview with you and whether to go to this radio station later and play these shows in L.A. and New York."

"How many people do you want to reach?"

As OK as he appears with turning people off, White hasn't lost his desire to play to a mass audience. (Indeed, he's headlining June's Arroyo Seco Weekend festival at the Rose Bowl with Neil Young and Robert Plant.)

So he has the Kroyan show he was at the studios of KROQ-FM, L.A.'s powerful alternative-rock station, to record a performance and do some friendly back-and-forth with one of the station's DJs.

The gig took place in a logo-dense room known as the HD Radio Sound Space, the type of stark and environment White hated in his early White Stripes days.

"We'd walk in a room like that and just be like, 'No,'" he said. "And we'd leave."

Has his attitude evolved? "Instead of saying 'evolved,' I'd say 'I've given up on a lot of it,'" he replied with a laugh. "No one cares about selling out anymore."

White said he understands the shift at a moment when few musicians can count on record sales as a meaningful revenue stream.

Still, he admitted he was struck after he moved to Nashville by the country capital's cheerful embrace of the type of commercial opportunities he'd scorned as an underground garage rocker in his native Detroit.

"If Garth Brooks is on the side of a bus, people are congratulating him, you know? Like he accomplished a great thing."

White is more uneasy about another expectation of 21st-century celebrity: that a pop star document his life on social media.

For one thing, the constant sharing leaves little room for the mystery he was attracted to in Bob Dylan and Lou Reed and other pre-Instagram era rockers. It's a quality he continues to care about, although he's not sure anybody else does.

"That coolness — around?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders. "Is a guy on a motorcycle still cool?"

More important is his concern for his privacy, especially for his two young children.

"I'm very cautious about having them be a part of all this," he said. "They never asked for it, and they need to have their own lives."

In holding back, he's thinking of them in another way too, since he fears that one effect of our ever-deepening stream of digital stimulation is that kids are no longer getting bored — and therefore aren't allowing their minds to wander toward art or music as his once did.

As he pondered that idea, White revealed a bit of the old-fashioned sensibility that his daring new album seems to shake.

"Sometimes I feel guilty as a parent — like, 'Oh, it's Sunday, I need to do something with them.' But you know what? I'm actually really enjoying that they're just laying on the carpet playing a board game. That's what I wish we've been doing at their age, and I loved it."

Brandi Carlile

By the Way, I Forgive You
(Elektra)



The title of Brandi Carlile's new album is a line that recurs throughout the opening track, "Every Time I Hear That Song." It's addressed to an ex-lover, and it contains sadness and regret and tenderness, but also a touch of getting-the-last-laugh vindication. In other words, it's full-blooded, emotionally nuanced and true to life, and it sets the tone for the rest of this gripping set.

"Whatever You Do" is a stark portrait of someone caught between devotion and independence — "I love you whatever you do, but I've got a life to live too" — while "The Mother" is an unabashed celebration of renewal and redemption brought on by motherhood. "Sugartooth" is a wrenching portrayal of an addict, with a strong strain of empathy that also runs through "The Joke" and maybe "Fulton County Jane Doe." A chilling ambiguity underpins the latter — for all the sweet understanding of "Fulton County Jane" expressed by the singer, could she actually be dead, and did the singer kill her?

Carlile has worked with big-name producers before in T Bone Burnett and Rick Rubin, and here she teams with one of Nashville's hottest right now, Dave Cobb, as well as Shooter Jennings. The music incorporates country, folk, rock and pop, and even when strings are employed, as they often are, the arrangements remain terse and spare, sharpening the focus on Carlile and her songs.

"I don't always choose to stay on the sunny side," Carlile warns on "Harder to Forgive." That's true, but it's her ability to convey so many shades of emotion that makes her work here so powerful.

— Nick Cristiano
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats

Tearing at the Seams (Stax)



The "Intro" to Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats' new album comes, oddly, halfway through the set's 12 tracks (14 if you get the deluxe edition). It's a pounding vamp, punctuated by chants, that's long on grit and energy. But "Intro" segues into the aptly titled "Coolin' Out," a delectable slice of sweet soul. That sequence follows the pattern at the start of "Tearing at the Seams," which opens with the greasy groove of "Shoe Boot" before moving on to the punchy pop-soul of "Be There."

Stax, of course, is the storied Memphis label that introduced such artists as Otis Redding and Sam and Dave. With their invigoratingly unvarnished and down-home approach, Rateliff and the Night Sweats are doing an admirable job of keeping Stax's bedrock musical spirit alive.

— Nick Cristiano
The Philadelphia Inquirer

George Ezra

Staying at Tamara's (Columbia)



George Ezra, best known for his lively breakout hit "Budapest," is a storyteller more than anything else, though the British singer-songwriter's deep baritone is what gets the most attention. That may change with his sophomore album, "Staying at Tamara's," which brings together an eclectic mix of '50s simplicity, spiky Afro-pop and Ed Sheeran-esque pop-folkiness for an interesting collection of travel-inspired tales.

Throughout "Staying at Tamara's," Ezra establishes himself as a talent as serious as his voice, while keeping the mood light.

— Glenn Gamboa
Newsday

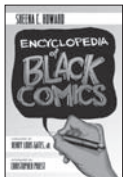
WEEKEND: BOOKS

'Encyclopedia' details rich history of black comics

By JEVON PHILLIPS
Los Angeles Times

Marvel Entertainment's ultra-successful release of "Black Panther" and the CW's recent launch of "Black Lightning" have put a spotlight on black superheroes, and their success illustrates how popular they are and that audiences outside of the African-American community celebrate them.

This newfound interest in these characters might spur some to look into black comics and black creators; luckily, the "Encyclopedia of Black Comics" came out just last year. Edited by Sheena Howard, who has a doctorate in rhetorical and intercultural communication from Howard University, the book is a collection of essays written about influential black writers, illustrators, inkers and creators of black comic books and comic strips.



"I think that's a really important distinction because a lot of fans today are into the superheroes and the comic book superheroes in the movies, but my interest is in the history of comics," says Howard.

Howard, who is currently writing her own comic book for Lion Forge Comics, answered some questions about the genesis of the book and what she learned in creating it.

How did this all start?

So I really liked "The Boondocks" [comic strip] and I started reading it in 2007, when I was at Howard University. I was 23 when I started my Ph.D., and I finished at 26, so I was still young and didn't have a goal in terms of what I wanted to study at Howard. I thought about "The Boondocks" as something I could write about and something I enjoyed. I really thought that it was a cultural icon for some of the things that it had accomplished. This is the comic strip, not the television show.

So that Ph.D. research led to the idea to look into comic books in general?

Exactly. I really thought that I was just going to be able to go to the library and find a book about the history of black

people in comics. I'm looking for months for this book. I found books like "The American History of Comics," but they very rarely mention black people in the industry in any real way.

After submitting your dissertation, what did you know and find out about black comics and the culture that it inhabits?

I knew a lot about some of the people who had led black comic artists and creators to do some of the things that they're doing today. "All Negro Comics" [1947] was the first black comic book, created by Orrin Cromwell Evans. So I knew those sorts of people. From there, I started to meet the people today [who] are creating the works and doing political work in comics that interest me.

Who would you consider to be the most influential black comic strip or comic book figure?

I definitely think that Aaron McGruder has to enter the conversation of most influential because what he did has never really been done. There's only a handful of syndicated comic strips created by black people. McGruder created this comic strip that crossed over to a wide audience

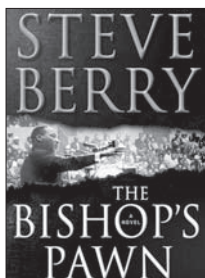
— both black and white and everything in between — and then he made it into a television series. I don't think we've seen that level of popularity, as far as comics are concerned, from a comic strip.

What you were trying to do with the "Encyclopedia of Black Comics."

The encyclopedia is over a hundred entries about black people of African descent who have published significant works in the United States. It's about the movers and shakers in the industry, both old and young, dead or alive. Almost half the book is black women — most of whom have never worked for a major publishing company and are actually self-published. That was really important to me too, because black women still haven't broken into the industry.

What would you do to improve the experience of reading comics for those in the black community?

I would definitely get more diverse people behind the scenes of these companies. Of course we want diversity in the characters and content we're consuming, but I also want people to get paid. I want people to be the writers, producer and editors — I want people behind the scenes.



The Bishop's Pawn

Steve Berry

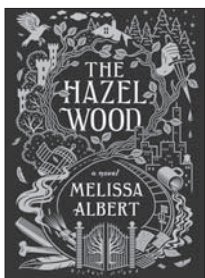
Before Cotton Malone worked with Stephanie Nelle and the Magellan Billet, he was a Navy lawyer who seemed to get cases that kept him busy, but weren't intellectually challenging.

When Nelle approaches him with a simple assignment, Malone cannot say no. A vessel containing a rare 1933 Double Eagle has sunk near Dry Tortugas National Park, just over 70 miles from Key West, Fla. His mission is to retrieve the case with the coin from the sunken ship and give it to Nelle. When he arrives, he quickly learns that he's not the only one trying to get the case.

The coin plays to get a tiny part of a much bolder plot when he learns the case is somewhat different and actually contains classified files. The contents reveal what really happened on April 4, 1968, the day of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.

Since the story showcases Cotton Malone's first mission, it lacks a lack of suspense regarding his safety because readers know he will come out just fine. So Berry has to create a compelling historical mystery with a terrific payoff to compensate — and he nails it.

— Jeff Ayers/AP



The Hazel Wood

Melissa Albert

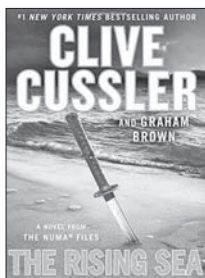
Alice Prosperine has grown up on fairy tales.

Her estranged grandmother, Althea Prosperine, is the author of "Tales from the Hinterland," a book of stories with a cult following. But Alice and her mother, Ella, have spent much of the 17-year-old's life on the road, running from the bad luck that seems to catch up with them wherever they go.

After the death of Althea, a recluse on her Hazel Wood estate, Alice's mom hopes their fortunes will change. When Ella is kidnapped, Alice is left with a trail of clues calling her to the Hazel Wood and hinting that the "Hinterland" is more than just a fairy tale invented by her grandmother.

"The Hazel Wood" is suspenseful and enchanting from the start, and the fairy tale world we're drawn into is eerie and dangerous. As Althea's Hinterland characters start to show their faces, we meet not the familiar Rapunzel or Sleeping Beauty, but doomed princesses and terrifying vampire-like temptresses.

— Allison Chopin
New York Daily News



The Rising Sea

Clive Cussler and Graham Brown

Kurt Austin heads the Special Assignment division of NUMA, the U.S. National Underwater and Marine Agency. His latest mission has him exploring various glaciers as he attempts to determine why they are melting faster than expected. The answer should be climate change, but what he uncovers is something far more sinister and disturbing.

The ocean levels are increasing at a rate that doesn't match his scientific calculations. When he presents the findings to the rest of his team, they soon learn of a mining operation in the East China Sea that's looking for a rare alloy, and the rapid methods used have caused catastrophic environmental issues as a result. The metal has indestructible properties, but obtaining it has the potential to raise the sea level so drastically that billions of people would be displaced if not outright killed.

Can Austin and his allies stop a man determined to win at all costs?

"The Rising Sea" is another entertaining and diverting read from a true legend in the adventure business.

— Jeff Ayers/AP



The Broken Girls

Simone St. James

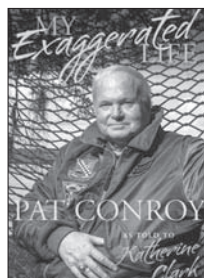
The broken girls are those who end up in Idlewild Hall, "the boarding school of last resort, where parents stashed their embarrassments, their failures, and their recalcitrant girls." Roommates at Idlewild in 1950 — Katie, CeCe, Robert and Sonia — refuse to be broken by the school's strict rules and the abandonment of their families.

Located in "the backwoods of Vermont," the castlelike fortress is rumored to be haunted by the ghost of Mary Hand, a young woman who once lived there.

In 2014, the now-shuttered Idlewild haunts journalist Fiona Sheridan, whose sister's body was found on the school's grounds 20 years ago. Deb Sherb's boyfriend was convicted of her murder, but Fiona believes the truth didn't come out in court. When a family with no local ties buys Idlewild, Fiona seizes on the chance to do a story on the school — and further investigate her sister's murder.

A creepy supernatural thriller, "The Broken Girls" also works well as a story about unshakable friendship, parenting issues, obsession and sexism folded into a satisfying plot.

— Oline H. Cogdill/AP



My Exaggerated Life

Pat Conroy and Katherine Clark

In "My Exaggerated Life," Conroy — author of "The Lords of Discipline" and "The Prince of Tides" — truly tells all. In his own approachable and witty voice, he reveals his art, his craft, his family and his foibles.

During the spring and summer of 2014, Conroy spent more than 200 hours on the phone with writer and oral historian Katherine Clark, who beautifully pulls off the challenge of assembling those conversations into an efficient and easy-flowing narrative.

Conroy died two years later of pancreatic cancer. Clark organizes her conversations chronologically, beginning with Conroy as a military brat with the tyrannical father portrayed in "The Great Santini" through his years in the American South, Rome and San Francisco. We learn about his marriages, his depression, his insecurities. He talks about his literary cruises and disappointments, his inability to say "no" to any fellow author who asked him to blurb his or her book and his therapist-horror.

Diving into "My Exaggerated Life" will leave readers thrilled, invigorated and inspired.

— Kim Curtis/AP

WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

“Star Wars: Episode VIII — The Last Jedi”: At the heart of the story is the continuing efforts by Supreme Leader Snoke (played with great villainy by Andy Serkis), Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) and General Hux (Domhnall Gleeson) to wipe out the Resistance under the direction of General Leia Organa (Carrie Fisher). This continuing conflict sets up numerous battles, none more intense than what happens in the final act of the film. There is so much creative writing and so many stunning images to applaud. Not only is the final battle a visual feast, it shows the smart writing of Rian Johnson. There are events and situations that seem far-fetched even in the Star Wars universe, but eventually make perfect sense. It's safe to say that the performance by the late Carrie Fisher serves as a fitting bouquet to the life and energy that she brought to the role of Leia ever since she begged Obi-Wan for help in “A New Hope.”



LUCASFILM/AP

Daisy Ridley is Rey in “Star Wars: The Last Jedi,” now on DVD.

“Legion: Season 1”: The series based on the Marvel comic by Chris Claremont and Bill Sienkiewicz is a mind-bending tale that weaves together elements of the X-Men franchise with a story that is mentally fanciful. Dan Stevens does a remarkable job playing a troubled young man who might be more than human. Diagnosed as schizophrenic as a child, David has been in and out of mental hospitals for years. Institutionalized once again, David finally faces the reality that the voices he hears and the visions he sees might actually be real. He escapes from the hospital with the help of a nurturing but demanding therapist (Jean Smart). This sets off an adventure that is so weirdly presented, being able to watch it repeatedly on DVD is a blessing.

Also available on DVD: **“Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz: We're not in Kansas Anymore Season One Volume One”:** The series looks at the adventures of Dorothy after she and her friends defeat the Wicked Witch of the West.

“The Robot Chicken Walking Dead Special: Look Who's Walking”: Offers insights for this parody offering including Andrew Lincoln, Norman Reedus, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Danai Gurira, Melissa McBride, Lauren Cohan, Steven Yeun and Sarah Wayne Callies.

“Love, Lies & Records”: Ashley Jensen stars in this drama set in a British register office, where people come to record life's big events.

“Acts of Violence”: When his fiancée is kidnapped, Roman (Ashton Holmes) and his ex-military brothers team up with Detective Avery (Bruce Willis) to take down the syndicate.

“Peyton Place: Part Three”: Dorothy Malone, Jim Farrow and Ryan O'Neal star in this prime-time soap opera.

“Mr. Robot: Season 3”: Mission to take down corporate America continues. **“The Americans: Season 5”:** KGB agents Philip and Elizabeth Jennings' dedication to their work comes at even more of a personal cost than before.

— Rick Bentley
Tribune News Service

FAMILY REUNION

‘Roseanne’ revival aims to keep it real, Trump included

BY LYNN ELBER
Associated Press

Roseanne Barr looks spiffier, John Goodman slimmer. But the mass-market plaid couch is a giveaway that ABC's “Roseanne” revival hasn't ditched its roots.

The blue-collar Conner family and the times in which they live are at the heart of the reboot, just as they were for the hit 1988-'97 sitcom inspired by Barr's stand-up comedy. The new “Roseanne” premieres April 2 on AFN-Pulse.

The prospect of updating the comedy was exciting “as long as we were permitted to tell relevant and authentic stories” about working-class characters, said Tom Werner, a producer for both shows.

That focus, noteworthy in the '80s when the show entered a relatively small TV universe, is still rare despite the swarm of broadcast, cable and streaming shows.

Profitability aside, the industry has scant artistic regard for such fare. “Roseanne” failed to earn a best sitcom Emmy in its long run, joining snubbed shows about the affluent including “Married with Children” and “The Middle.” (Barr and “Roseanne” co-star Laurie Metcalf received acting trophies.)

“It's shocking that ‘Roseanne’ was never even nominated for best comedy series at the Emmys despite winning the Golden Globe for best comedy, a Peabody and being in the top 10 Nielsen ratings year after year,” said Tom O'Neil, author of “The Emmys” and editor of the Gold Derby awards website.

But the show's perspective might carry more weight today.

The 2016 presidential campaign “was a wake-up call in that there were a large group of voters who were frustrated with the status quo” and being sidelined by the economy, Werner said. “What we're interested in doing is just telling honest stories about a family that's up against it.”

In “Roseanne,” it's up to matriarch Roseanne, a supporter of President Donald Trump, and her sister, Jackie (Metcalf), a hard-core oppositist to handle the political jousting.

“He talked about jobs” and shaking things up, Roseanne says of Trump in one scene. “I know this may come as a shock to you, but we almost lost our house because of the way things were going.”

“Have you looked at the news? Because now things are worse,” Jackie retorts.

“Not on the real news,” says Roseanne.

Sisterly love defuses the tension as punches aimed at doing the same for viewers.



ABC

“Roseanne” stars, from left, Ames McNamara, Sara Gilbert, Laurie Metcalf, Emma Kenney, Jayden Rey, Roseanne Barr, Michael Fishman, John Goodman, Lecy Goranson and Sarah Chalke. The show premieres April 2 on AFN-Pulse.

Whether a sitcom can double as meeting ground for a divided nation, as “All in the Family” once did, remains to be seen given the current din from social media and cable news shows.

During a Q&A with TV critics in January, Barr initially ducked a question about whether her own politics — she supported Trump — influenced her character’s.

“Go ahead, Bruce,” she said, inviting series producer Bruce Helford to answer. But the usually forthright Barr, also a writer and producer on the show, finally divvied in. “I have always attempted to portray a realistic portrait of the American people and of working-class people. ... And, in fact, it was working-class people who elected Trump. So I felt that was very real, and something that needed to be discussed,” Barr said.

The same holds true for “people actually hating other people for the way they voted, which I feel is not American. And so I wanted to bring it (the series) right down the middle, and we did,” said Barr. She added that she’s not an apologist for the president and doesn’t agree with all he’s said and done, including some “crazy” things.

Whether the White House or child-rearing are on the family table, the writing has the same zest and bite as the original series. Roseanne’s distinctive cackle-laugh is intact, although she’s less prickly. And if familiarity breeds more comfort for viewers, the largely intact cast is there to help. The Conner kids are back, including Sara Gilbert as Darlene, Michael Fishman as D.J. and Lecy Goranson as Becky. Sarah Chalke, who played Becky in later seasons, is on hand as a new character, and guest stars including Estelle Parsons and Sandra Bernhard will reprise their roles.

Goodman’s return required sleight of hand, given that Dan was killed off by a heart attack in the original’s final season. The revision is handled with a wink in the season opener, and Werner offers no apologies for rewriting TV history (as the original “Dallas” did when it turned a character’s death into a dream sequence).

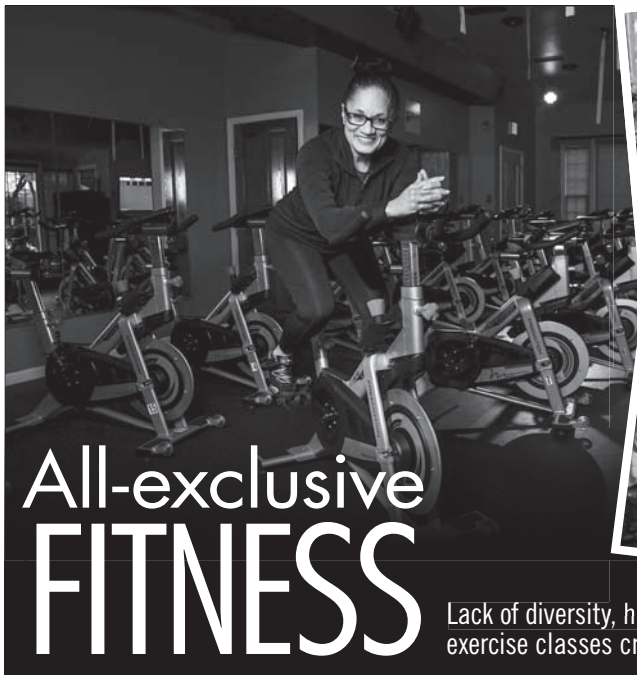
“I appreciate the microscope which the show is under, but I’d rather see John Goodman in these episodes than not,” he said.

Goodman’s reaction: “I thought it was a clever way to do it — to handle it and get it out of the way.”

I have always attempted to portray a realistic portrait of the American people and of working-class people. ... And, in fact, it was working-class people who elected Trump. So I felt that was very real, and something that needed to be discussed.”

— Roseanne Barr

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

All-exclusive
FITNESS

By LAVANYA RAMANATHAN
The Washington Post

After a few committed months of not you at a studio in New York, Christina Rice had found her niche. So when the studio announced that it was offering teacher training, she signed right up.

It was only when she arrived with her mat that she noticed something striking.

There were 54 other women and men in the 10-week course, and not one of them looked like her. She was the lone African-American in the class.

"I did bond with some of the other students," says Rice. "But I did feel very isolated at times. There were no teachers of color. I didn't have another woman who looked like me, who understood my struggles, my insecurities."

—specialized, exercise-specific gyms — are exploding in gentrifying urban areas. They include not only hot yoga but also CrossFit, which is everywhere; Barry's Bootcamp (in Los Angeles, Nashville and Washington, along with other major cities); SoulCycle (nearly 20 markets); or Orangetheory (hundreds of studios nationwide).

They are the modern answer to the sprawling, soulless gym, which insists on financial commitment but doesn't really care whether you actually work out. In the boutique world, you make reservations. You're greeted with smiles. You're served an ice-cold glass of the "spin class is self-care" Kool-Aid.

According to the International

Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association, the industry trade group, more than 18 million people now claim membership in a boutique studio (though with the studios' class-by-class reservation model, "allegiance" might be a better term). In a relatively short period — CrossFit had been around for decades but truly caught fire around 2012; Barry's Bootcamp began expanding in 2011 — they have claimed half as many exercisers as traditional gyms.

But some people have begun to question the stark differences between the studios and the neighborhood YMCA. Like the prices: In Washington, a single 50-minute Barry's Bootcamp class is \$34. Spinning studio Flywheel charges \$30. Solidcore, a Pilates-like workout, can run as much as \$37, or about half the cost of a monthly membership in most urban gyms.

And like Rice, other fitness junkies have begun to notice who isn't coming. Sweat through a class in one of these studios and it's very possible that you'll see it, too: many, many lithe young white bodies and very few people of color. Or older or heavier exercisers.

Leticia Long has regularly attended classes such as Orangetheory and SoulCycle because she owns Wired Cycling, a studio offering cycling and TRX in Washington. Her daughter, she says, loves Barry's.

But Long, who is African-American and Hispanic, is struck by what she sees there.

"What is their messaging saying about aging? What is it? What is beauty? I look at every-

thing from the signage to the marketing materials," she says. All she sees is millennials. "How open and inclusive is that?"

There hasn't been a time in our collective history where people have been as integrated as they are now," adds Jessamyn Stanley, a North Carolina-based yoga teacher and author. And yet, pick a class, any class, she says. "Is this really everybody, or just everybody that can afford to go?"

Daniel T. Lichter, a Cornell University sociology professor and demographer, agrees that cities are more integrated, but he sees the rise of boutique businesses such as juice bars and studios — with their specific clientele — as a trend in keeping with larger demographic shifts. "We've seen this return of the white-middle class, minority professionals, and professional immigrants. There's more money in the city now," he says. "There's now a large enough clientele that they can cater to and specialize in."

Some have made efforts to foster diversity. In an email, SoulCycle chief executive Melanie Whelan described her company's effort to maintain a team of instructors that give "riders a range of genders, races, backgrounds and personalities to identify with." The company also maintains an inclusivity and diversity council and offers underserved youths in some markets 12-week scholarships to take classes and learn nutrition. Barry's Bootcamp declined a request for comment, while Flywheel did not respond to a request.

But Stanley, who has gained some fame with her criticisms

of boutique workout and yoga culture's lack of diversity, describes the studios she has visited outside the big-city bubble as anything but diverse. She tackles the subject in her book "Every Body Yoga." The issue, she says, extends beyond race.

She's often the only fat woman in the room as well, she says. And if you're looking for a mature crowd, you'll have to keep looking, too: By the health club association's reckoning, the average age of studio exercisers is 30. "The messaging," says Stanley, "is essentially: You're allowed in this space if you are white, slender, able-bodied and less than 45, cisgender and heterosexual. And if you're not, then you're not welcome."

Todd Miller is director of George Washington University's Weight Management and Human Performance Laboratory and has researched commercial gyms. He sees the CrossFit boom as the beginning of boutique workout culture, and its origin story as a marketing tool that separates these classes from hopping on an elliptical for a half-hour and calling it a day.

"They're trying to cater to a specific kind of person: someone who works out to the point that it feels like it's going to kill them," Miller says.

His research into workout habits reveals that "people want to be around others who are like them. That's almost universal."

It all speaks to the subtle selling point of the specialized studios. It's not the way their slim, exquisitely carved instructors can execute a side plank, a sumo squat or a warrior pose. It's



their very cliquishness.

What makes such studios appealing, a spokeswoman for the health club trade group wrote in an email, is "the sense of belonging, where everyone is 'like them.'" What they foster is known in the business as "tribes," spandex-clad warriors who feel a special kinship after enduring a couple of dozen burpees together.

The tribe model has a distinct upside, says Miller: The sense of community encourages exercisers to keep exercising — something conventional gyms haven't been successful at.

But it has a downside as well. "If you're trying to get a select group of people by saying 'This workout is really hard,' you're sending a message to unfit people who really need exercise."

"Don't come here, because you're not wanted." You're making it unappealing to the people who need it the most," Miller says.

Stanley frets that it's practically impossible to explain to the majority.

"Being the only person of color or fat person," she says, is "a feeling of utmost loneliness. You can determine to ignore it, or you can try to find a way to assimilate into it."

"That's enough for a lot of people to not even go."

Clockwise from left: Leticia Long, owner of Wired Cycling in Washington, has tried to make her studio more diverse by offering more-affordable classes and fostering community; yoga instructor Jessamyn Stanley says messaging is a large part of where studios fail prospective students; women take part in a class at Wired Cycling.

The Washington Post photos

WEEKEND: FAMILY



Summer camps can help kids have fun and learn new skills, but the fierce competition for popular camps has parents stressed. Many dual-income households just need to find somewhere to put their kids over the summer.

Scheduling summer

Parents feel pressured to get kids into 'top-choice' camps

BY AIMEE BLANCHETTE
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

As the parent of a 6- and a 9-year-old, Jen Swanson has mastered the art of summer scheduling. Right after Christmas, she starts gathering camp and activity information and is ready to pounce the moment camp registration opens at the start of the year.

"The competitiveness of getting into top-choice summer camps is insane," the New Brighton, Minn., woman said. "But I want to make sure they are being challenged and not just sitting around all day."

In today's overscheduled, overachieving, high-tech society, keeping summer carefree (and screen-free) is a challenge. For many parents, the 12 or so weeks of summer are less about sleeping in and sunshine, and more about calendars and carpools.

Despite logging onto her two laptops, iPad and iPhone minutes before registration started at 6 a.m., Swanson was able to get only one of her sons into the coveted Battle Bots camp through the University of Minnesota. Three minutes later, the camp was full, landing her other son 13th in line on a waiting list.

As a result, neither of Swanson's sons will get to attend their top-choice camp, because "from a sanity perspective, I can't handle two different drop-offs," she said.

To improve her chances next year, Swanson said her husband will join the early-morning registration ritual, each signing up one

child simultaneously.

"This is what we are reduced to," she said. "The level of stress I experience in January and February keeps me up at night."

Lucky for the Swansons and thousands of other families in search of ways to fill their kids' summer schedules, the opportunities are endless. With so many options, parenting in the summer can sometimes feel like a competi-

'The level of stress I experience in January and February keeps me up at night.'

Jen Swanson
mother of two boys
who attend summer camps

tive sport, rather than the laid back summers that parents remember.

"I grew up in rural Minnesota, where I never had those opportunities to attend camp, so this is a very different mind-set for me," said Darin Broton, an Engen, Minn., father of two, ages 6 and 22 months. "I also know that my son enjoys these things immensely, and he has learned so much — whether it's through athletics or Scouts, it's about building strong relationships and social skills."

Then there are the weeks with grandparents, the family vacation and downtime to do nothing — all of that has to be scheduled, too.

"Our summer camps program has seen tremendous growth (more than 500 percent) over the last 10 years," said Ryan Barth, the outdoor education supervisor. "People want outdoor programming in a safe environment where their kids can catch critters in a pond or meet a snake at a nature center."

Camp as day care is another reason for the boom.

"Parents need somewhere for their kids to go," Barth said.

According to data from the Pew Research Center, dual-income households with young children in the U.S. have become more commonplace over the past six decades, going from 25 percent in 1960 to 60 percent in 2012.

"At the end of the day, everyone wants to have well-balanced kids, and getting them out in nature, involved in different experiences, is something that parents look for," said Diana Mulvill, senior director of marketing for YMCA Twin Cities youth programs. "Parents are looking for ways to get kids away from the screen; they are so addicted to it, and we're realizing the detriments of that."

Of course, a calendar full of camps isn't for everyone. Between work, family vacations, logistics and financial restraints, adding summer camp might be too much.

After spending some time with camp guides, a notebook and calculator, Broton decided that less was more: "We're only doing one camp per month to make sure our son isn't overscheduled and we're not going broke."

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



No fooling: Somehow we turned out all right

If I had a dollar for every time I've slapped my hand to my forehead and thought, "I'm such a fool," I'd be rich. They say — whoever "they" are — that one should live without regrets, but for me, regret has always been a part of my schtick.

Something in my childhood made me this way — a person who focuses on her own faults and beats herself up for them. Some are lucky to have iron-clad egos that protect them from criticism and self-doubt. I, on the other hand, was a kid with dreaded "self-esteem issues" that compelled me to constantly seek reassurance. Like many people with insecurities, humor and self-deprecation became my defense mechanisms.

At my first dance in middle school, I won best costume when I came dressed as a huge onion, much to my parents' dismay. That night, I got the laughs and attention I was shooting for, along with a "Boontown Rats" record as my first-place prize. But, not surprisingly, no boys asked me to dance. In high school, my misplaced pleas for attention earned me the title "1984 Class Clown," which I hid from my parents until it was reported in my hometown newspaper. Needless to say, they were not amused.

In college, I fully embraced my newfound freedom to make a complete idiot of myself, much of which (mercifully) I cannot recall. The college memories that are clear make me cringe with embarrassment to this very day. Thankfully, digital photography and social media had not yet been invented.

As a young adult in the workforce, I thought I made every rookie mistake in the book and was doomed to failure. I was actually quite fastidious, dedicated, hard-working and reliable, but as always, I focused on everything I did wrong rather than right.

Today I still feel as if I'm bumbling through life. I'm always running late, I inevitably burn the toast, I say the wrong thing, I overstay my welcome, I never remember people's names, I eat too much.

But as our last child prepares to graduate from high school and leave the nest for college, I'm reflecting more clearly on my last 24 years as a military wife and mother of three, and I'm surprised to find that I have no shame, no remorse, no regrets.

In fact, I feel pretty damned good about it.

Being a military wife and mother hasn't been easy by any means. At first, marrying a Navy guy seemed so glamorous. At our wedding, our relatives oohed and aahed when Francis' uniformed buddies formed a sword arch. Everyone believed we would lead a life of adventure, honor, pomp and circumstance.

But reality soon hit, and I found myself where most military spouses eventually turn up — alone in an unfamiliar place without a job or friends, solely responsible for the household and kids. Facing daunting circumstances, nature, instinct or pure necessity kicked in, revealing qualities I didn't know I possessed. I didn't make a conscious decision to be a dedicated wife and mother, I just did what needed to be done without thinking about it. Hour after hour, day after day, year after year.

When we were stationed in England, and our son was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, I shed tears, then hit the ground running because I had no choice. During deployments and TDY, I did what every military spouse does — I chopped onions, did carpool pickups, nursed the baby, cut grass, took out garbage, paid bills, folded laundry, visited in-laws and fixed the leaky faucet.

The added responsibility and stress that military moves, deployments and separations added to marriage and parenting forced me to put my own fragile ego aside and get to work. Looking back now, I realize that I — the bumbling class clown — became a rock for our family.

I mix up left and right, forget to add email attachments, miss exits and overcook beef, but I'm no fool. I'm a proud military wife and mother who did whatever it took to create a stable home and to raise three humans who will soon go out into this world and touch the lives of others.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

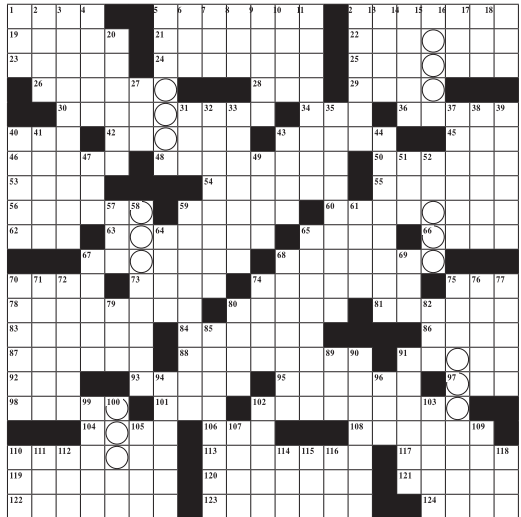
WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

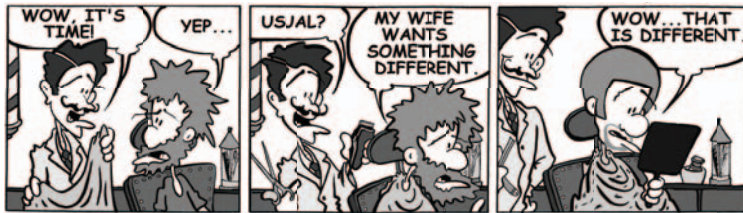
FOLLOW THE SUN

BY FINN VIGELAND / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

- ACROSS**
- 1 Government policy chief
- 5 Assented
- 12 Not empirical
- 19 Not natural-looking
- 21 Sometimes hard-to-find string opening
- 22 Drunkard
- 23 Overtime co-host of "The View," informally
- 24 Contest once hosted by Bob Barker
- 25 Makes reference (to)
- 26 Catastrophic event that can be caused by a gigantic earthquake
- 28 "Fer sher"
- 29 Folds, as a business
- 30 Headed for
- 34 Abhc on mil. mail
- 36 French painter of ballerinas
- 40 Injunction
- 42 How Hercules Poirot likes to address Hastings
- 43 Money in Malmö
- 45 Headstone inits.
- 46 Stag
- 48 Ones in rocking chairs, stereotypically
- 50 Smartphone feature
- 53 Cherry variety
- 54 Start to many bumper stickers
- 55 Response to pointing out a resemblance between two people
- 56 Hollywood labor groups
- 59 See 71-Down
- 60 Plant stalk
- 62 Crank (up)
- 63 Chipotle choice
- 65 Niitwit
- 66 180s
- 67 2015 hit spinoff of "Despicable Me"
- 68 How someone in awe might describe himself
- 70 Pretty cool, in slang
- 73 One of the Big Four accounting firms
- 74 Deft touch
- 75 Place-holder letters
- 78 Better now
- 80 Trivia fodder
- 81 All ____
- 83 Rough shelter
- 84 Hannah who coined the phrase "the banality of evil"
- 86 Largest city in the Baltics
- 87 Planets like ours, in sci-fi
- 88 Hue lighter than lime
- 91 Per ____ (yearly)
- 92 Vintage-film channel
- 93 Goody
- 95 Like St. Augustine, among all U.S. cities
- 97 College, to a Brit
- 98 Amérique
- 101 Immigrants' class, for short
- 102 Only words on the front of the Great Seal of the United States
- 104 Really fresh
- 106 Its hub at JFK, was designed by Eero Saarinen
- 108 Hubbub
- 110 Artistic, chatty sorts, it's said
- 113 Draft
- 117 Testify
- 119 "I got the check"
- 120 Ancient, undeciphered writing system
- 121 Towel fabric
- 122 Relatives of asters
- 123 Tony who won a Tony for "Angels in America"
- 124 "It's a deal!"
- DOWN**
- 1 E.M.T.'s training
- 2 Speed along
- 3 Print ad come-on
- 4 Sit on the throne
- 5 International conglomerate whose name means "three stars"
- 6 Cable-news host
- 7 Gehats, e.g.
- 8 Some A.L. players
- 9 Response to a surprising claim
- 10 "That's something ____"
- 11 Voyager
- 12 Medieval Spanish kingdom
- 13 Sport last played in the Olympics in 1936
- 14 Was awesome
- 15 Occupied
- 16 Funny
- 17 Middle-me, ____
- 18 Only, check recipient, maybe
- 20 "Stars above!"
- 27 "____ soon?"
- 31 Smear
- 32 Writing in a window?
- 33 Paranoid sorts, in slang
- 35 Pushes back
- 37 "Mamma Mia!" setting
- 38 In a light manner
- 39 Outbreaks
- 40 Anthropomorphic king of Celesteville
- 41 "Still ____" (Julianne Moore film)
- 43 Rios, e.g.
- 44 Decisive assessment
- 47 Intl. Rescue Committee, e.g.
- 49 R.&B. singer with the hits "So Sick" and "Mad"
- 51 Tempe sch.
- 52 Things in restaurant windows
- 57 Sac-like result
- 58 Outlay that cannot be recovered
- 59 Some corsage wearers
- 61 Grand Lodge group
- 64 Ready ____ or red, maybe
- 65 "Let's keep this between us"
- 67 Wasn't kidding about
- 68 Stunt at the end of a powerful performance
- 69 Informal assent
- 70 Go back on one's word?
- 71 With 59-Across, some works of Tennessee Williams
- 72 Big ____ (the drug industry)
- 74 Biter
- 75 Moment of liftoff
- 76 Dangerous too
- 77 "Same here"
- 79 Legal vowelless
- 80 Hercules act
- 82 Bit of art pottery
- 85 Preface to a heart-to-heart conversation
- 89 End of a George Washington address?
- 90 Safer alternative to paintball
- 91 If you're lucky
- 94 Candy brand owned by Hershey
- 96 Word before and after "no"
- 99 Salt-N-Pepa and Ben Folds Five
- 100 Branch of Islam
- 102 Rakes in
- 103 Not taken seriously?
- 105 Tiniest gaming
- 107 Popular game console that sounds like two pronouns
- 109 It's a long story
- 110 "Keep movin'!"
- 111 Info for a chauffeur, perhaps
- 112 Yahoo alternative
- 114 "Yuck!"
- 115 Grp. of connected computers
- 116 / oo of a 43-Across
- 118 Manhattan part ____ or a suburb near Manhattan

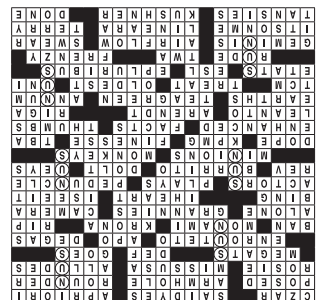


GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

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For live
'Jesus Christ
Superstar,'

NBC turns to Legend

By MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

Most Easter Sundays, you can find John Legend at home, helping cook a big dinner for family and friends. Except this Easter. He'll be a little busy — being Jesus Christ in front of millions.

Legend leads a cast that includes Sara Bareilles and Alice Cooper in a live NBC version of the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar" by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice.

It will be the latest in the prime-time lineup of live TV musical remakes that kicked off five years ago with "The Sound of Music" and includes "Peter Pan," "Grease," "The Wiz" and "Hairspray." While the shows often air at Christmas, this time it made sense for an Easter broadcast of the 47-year-old musical.

"It's an iconic show. It's meant a lot to a lot of people for a long time," Legend said. "You want people who are fans of it already to be excited by our rendition. But then also want to attract new people to the show, too."

The musical explores the caustic intersection of politics and showbiz, using a pulsating guitar- and organ-driven score that includes "I Don't Know How to Love Him," "Everything's Alright" and "Superstar."

Live TV musicals have become progressively more complex, with the use of cars and multiple locations, sometimes outdoors. But "Jesus Christ Superstar"

will be more stripped down, an attempt to capture a concert vibe. It will be staged inside an army in Brooklyn with about 12 cameras.

The actors will be augmented by a 32-piece band — including a mobile, all-woman string quartet — and 1,500 people will be in the audience, surrounding the action and interacting sometimes with the performers. The stage will be just 2 feet above a mosh pit.

"I'm so excited that we have a live audience to work with and to feed the energy in the room because I think, as someone who's a concert performer and now in the theater, that's the missing link so much of the time," said Bareilles, who plays Mary Magdalene.

Director David Leveaux is promising this version of the musical to be "very unpacked, not neat, quite raw." The rest of the cast includes Brandon Victor Dixon as Judas, Cooper as King Herod and Norm Lewis as Caiaphas.

Costume designer Paul Tazewell, who dressed the "Hamilton" cast, has picked flowing tunics and modern, sexy silhouettes. Choreographer Camille A. Brown will mix traditional social dances with hip-hop, New Orleans-style second-line dancing and The Chariot.

Leveaux, who in a 2013 Broadway revival of "Romeo and Juliet" put Orlando Bloom on a motorcycle with a set that spit fire, will use real flames and pyrotechnics for "Superstar." He'll also employ some low-tech tricks, like a white scarf

that can have multiple uses.

"This is live. So you create ingredients that can combust because it's live," said Marc Platt, an executive producer. "In this instance, we have a live audience and an interactive concert, and live musicians — never done before. So we're not daunted by it. We welcome what's live and what's risky about it because that's what's exciting."

Legend, who has won a Grammy, Tony and Oscar, knows he is just an Emmy away from winning the coveted EGOT, but he isn't planning that his portrayal of Jesus will add to his trophy haul. He made his acting debut in 2016's "La La Land."

"I have no presumptions about the idea that I'll be considered an award-winning actor in my second role as an actor," he said, laughing. "But I'm aware of the gap in my EGOT."

The annual live broadcasts have gradually dipped in viewership, with the lowest being "A Christmas Story Live" last Christmas that attracted 4.5 million viewers — but they've become popular fodder for hate-tweeting.

"It's part of it. You just kind of do the best you can," said executive producer Neil Meron, who helped start the live TV trend with "The Sound of Music" broadcast in 2013. "They'll rip it apart, they'll praise it."

Leveaux has even coined a new term for the potential online hating this time, one that combines Twitter with crucifixion. He calls it death by "twitterfixion."

Trump calls Roseanne Barr after debut of show

President Donald Trump called Roseanne Barr after an estimated 18.4 million viewers tuned in for the reboot of "Roseanne."

Speaking by telephone on ABC's "Good Morning America" on Thursday, Barr said Wednesday night's call was pretty exciting. Barr said Trump congratulated her and talked about television and ratings. She said the Republican was happy for her. She says, "I've known him for many years and he's done a lot of nice things for me over the years."

Barr has been a Trump supporter and plays a supporter on the updated sitcom.

"Roseanne" returned on Tuesday, more than two decades after the original ended its hit run. The hourlong debut episode was watched by 10 percent more viewers than saw the May 1997 finale of ABC's original "Roseanne."

Glover: Not 'too busy' to make his canceled 'Deadpool' series

Donald Glover addressed FX's abrupt cancellation of his animated "Deadpool" series — and made it clear he wasn't too busy to make the show.

Glover gave people a taste of what they're missing by sharing an apparent script for an episode, in which the anti-hero breaks the fourth wall and blatantly ponders why the series was canceled.

"Do you think they canceled the show because of racism?!" Deadpool questions on the script's eighth page. "Yeah, all the writers were black. The references were pretty black, too. I heard they went over lunch budget ordering Jamaican food at least once a week." But then he reasoned that they couldn't possibly be "alienating" their white audience since they had an episode centering on goat yoga, and another on Taylor Swift.

In addition to sharing the 15-page script, Glover — who created and stars in another FX series, "Atlanta" — wrote in a tweet, "for the record: I wasn't too busy to work on Deadpool."

FX announced its decision to ax the project on Sunday.

Other news

■ Los Angeles police Wednesday were investigating an alleged attack on actor **Corey Feldman**, who tweeted that he was hospitalized after being stabbed, officer Drake Madison said. Feldman didn't appear to have any stab wounds, Madison said.

■ Rapper **DMX** was sentenced Wednesday to a year in prison for evading \$1.7 million in taxes. The sentence in Manhattan federal court came after the judge agreed to listen to the track "Slippin'," one of DMX's biggest hits, which defense attorneys said showed a man who knew what it was to come back after bottoming out.

■ Total Divas cast member **Maryse Ouellet Mizanin** and her WWE champ husband, **Mike "The Miz" Mizanin** have a baby girl. The first-time parents took to Instagram on Wednesday to announce that Monroe Sky Mizanin was born at 11:40 p.m. Tuesday. The announcement featured a photo of the WWE stars clapping their daughter's hand.

■ R. Kelly began grooming a teen to be one of his sex "pets" when she was 14 years old, his former girlfriend claims in a new interview — the latest disturbing sexual misconduct allegations against the R&B star. Kitti Jones, who dated Kelly from 2011 to 2013, says in a new BBC Three documentary that Kelly made her have sex with him and others inside what she characterized as a "sex dungeon." A rep for R. Kelly said the singer does not have a comment on the new allegations.

From wire services

Clockwise from foreground center, the cast of "Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert," is John Legend as Jesus Christ; Sara Bareilles as Mary Magdalene; Alice Cooper as King Herod; Brandon Victor Dixon as Judas Iscariot; and Jason Tam as Peter. The show airs Monday on AFN-Movie. NBC/AP

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OPINION

Scandal-wounded Shulkin faces fight over privatization as factor in ouster

By TOM PHILPOTT
Special to Stars and Stripes

Concerned Veterans for America, a group of policy advocates funded by the billionaire Koch brothers, who want to shrink the size of federal bureaucracies including the Department of Veterans Affairs, appears to have won a major victory with President Donald Trump's firing of Dr. David Shulkin as VA secretary.

Trump announced by tweet he wants his personal physician at the White House, Navy Rear Adm. Ronny L. Jackson, to run the government's second-largest department. Jackson's bio sheet shows an executive-level experience to justify the pick. However, Trump sees Jackson almost daily, and the 50-year-old physician praised the president's health effusively at a White House press conference in January.

Shulkin, a holdout from the Obama administration and an open secret that secretary who Trump had extolled openly and often during his first year as president, saw his support within the administration deteriorate in recent months.

In a New York Times commentary Thursday, Shulkin said the VA became entangled in a power struggle, with some political appointees choosing to promote their agendas instead of what's best for veterans. These individuals, who seek to privatize veteran health care as an alternative to government-run VA care, unfortunately fail to engage in realistic plans regarding who will care for more than 9 million veterans who rely on the department for life-sustaining care.

Shulkin said the private sector "is ill-prepared to handle the number and complexity of patients that would come from closing or downsizing VA hospitals and clinics, particularly when it involves the mental health needs of people scarred by the horrors of war."

At the urging of major veteran organizations, Shulkin resisted the influence of Concerned Veterans for America alumni, hired at the White House and at Fox News. CVA and its supporters want to see more VA health care dollars shifted from modernizing and staffing VA hospitals and clinics to subsidizing private-sector care or offering health insurance so veterans can use community providers.

Traditional veteran groups argue that VA medical centers and clinics must be fully staffed and resourced to ensure timely care and to protect VA-unique expertise in treating wounds of war. The private sector, they maintain, can't match the VA for coordinated veterans care or for providing polytrauma care, prosthetic and orthotic services, treating post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury, caring for spinal cord injuries or rehabilitating veterans who lose hearing or sight.

"Most Americans understand that the people we send off to war have different needs than the general population," Shulkin told me in an 2016 interview to argue for preserving the VA health care system.

But Shulkin's standing to fight for VA programs and budgets was weakened in February when the VA Inspector General issued a scathing report on travel abuses by Shulkin and staff on a 10-day trip to Denmark and London last July. The trip cost VA more than \$122,000, included Shulkin's wife and much sightseeing, and a gift of tickets to the Wimbledon tennis tournament.

A VA ethics official had approved the trip in advance based in part on misinformation from Shulkin's staff, the IG found. To add "relevant context," the IG said days

MILITARY UPDATE

before the trip, Shulkin signed a memo to all VA staff directing that managers allow only "essential" employee travel to save on travel dollars.

As secretary, Shulkin was forced to accept White House picks for key VA staff positions. After release of the IG report, Shulkin reimbursed the VA for his wife's travels but also complained to news outlets that some White House appointees at the VA were working to undermine him. Intrigue and dysfunction at the VA perhaps peaked when executives in charge of Shulkin's communications staff reportedly used the IG report to urge staff on the House Veterans Affairs Committee to support Shulkin's removal. Committee Chairman Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., instead gave the secretary a strong endorsement.

With a few exceptions, Shulkin was popular with both Republicans and Democrats on veteran affairs committees as well as with major veteran organizations. Many of them lauded his service on the evening he was fired.

Shulkin "has shown grace under fire amid the long-circulated rumors of his imminent departure," said John Rowan, national president of Vietnam Veterans of America. Rowan noted Shulkin's "firm stance to protect [the VA] from those who would like to see it handed over to the for-profit, private-sector health systems."

Shulkin, said The American Legion, was "making meaningful, positive changes at the VA."

Disabed American Veterans said the departing secretary made "tremendous strides in areas such as appeals modernization, mental health care access and department-wide oversight and accountability" while steering "VA toward sensible, lasting transformation of veterans' health care."

DAV Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster warned of a leadership vacuum at the VA with no secretary, no undersecretaries of health or benefits, and with the named acting secretary, Robert Wilkie, newly installed as Pentagon manpower chief, having "no background in health care and no apparent experience" with the VA.



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

David Shulkin is out as Department of Veterans Affairs secretary. He was fired Wednesday by President Donald Trump.

Concerned Veterans for America said Shulkin made "significant headway in reforming the department, but ultimately became a distraction from the important task of improving health care for our veterans."

Physician Shulkin ran private-sector health systems and served a year as VA undersecretary of health before becoming secretary. In 2016, he criticized a "straw-man" report from outside health advisers appointed to recommend ways to improve veteran services. The report proposed gradually shutting down all VA medical centers and outpatient services and sending 9 million patients into the private sector for care. The congressionally created Commission on Care eventually rejected that minority view, in part at Shulkin's urging.

"This would be a terrible mistake, a terrible disservice for veterans and for the country, [and] would lead to the end of the VA health care system," Shulkin said.

The commission was headed by the lawman report, Darin Selnick, was an adviser to Concerned Veterans for America. He landed a job at the VA with the Trump administration but bumped heads with Shulkin and moved to the White House to advise on veterans' issues. Selnick has been serving on the Domestic Policy Council. According to Politico, he announced in a recent email plans to return to the VA.

Fox News personality Pete Hegseth, a former director of CVA who also advises Trump on veteran issues, was considered for VA secretary, according to news reports. But Selnick was opposed by most traditional veteran groups.

Trump's new pick for secretary faces a steep learning curve. In 1995 Jackson got his Navy commission and graduated as a doctor of medicine from University of Texas Medical Branch. An emergency medicine specialist, he was detachment officer-in-charge and diving medical officer at Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 8 in Sigonella, Sicily. He also was diving safety officer at the Naval Safety Center in Norfolk, Va. In 2005 he deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as a medical evacuation physician with a surgical shock trauma platoon in Taqadum, Iraq. In 2006, Jackson became a White House physician and has served there ever since, including as physician to the president since 2013.

Shulkin understood the intricacies of a wide array of veteran programs when he appeared before Congress or met with veteran groups. He shaped caregiver expansion plans and led efforts to streamline VA community care options. But he resisted legislation favored by the White House to have the VA cede more control of veterans' health care, favoring a steady shift toward privatization of VA care.

What Jackson knows about the VA or running a large organization is to be determined. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., former chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, warned that he'd better not want to privatize VA health care. The Koch brothers want that, Sanders said, but every major vet group opposes it.

"I stand with them," Sanders said. "Our job is to strengthen the VA in order to provide high-quality care to our veterans, not dismember it."

Sen. John Isaacson, R-Ga., chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, said Shulkin "made a tremendous impact toward improving the lives of veterans." Of Jackson, he said, "I look forward to ... learning more about him."

Sends comments to Military Update, P.O. Box 231111, Centerville, Va. 20120; email mupdate@aoi.com; Twitter: @Military_Update.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Teacher learns valuable lesson The Orange County (Calif.) Register

Sometimes the free-speech arguments for supporting someone who has said something appalling are certainly makeable, and at the same time people of good sense are glad they are not the ones who have to make them.

It takes a special type of ACLU lawyer to go to court for the Nazis when they want to hold a parade.

Of course the unthoughtful, unkind utterances of disgraced and now fired teacher Gregory Salcido about the supposed lack of high intellect he sees in young people who want to enter our country's armed forces are of a different kind than other types of American free speech because the words were spoken in a classroom.

It's certainly not that, as a teacher, Salcido gives up his First Amendment rights outside his teaching hours. But when class is in session, you wouldn't want to see a teacher telling students how to vote, or what church to go to, or whether to go to church at all.

You want to see a teacher explaining all sides of an issue, perhaps explaining with passion what the options are, but certainly without so much an eye to his own personal prejudices, unless it's a paltry matter like how he takes his burger.

But Salcido, the El Rancho High School teacher who also is a longtime member of the Pico Rivera City Council, wasn't encouraging his students to think for themselves. He was ranting on an anti-immigrant rant, apparently spurred by a student wearing a Marines sweatshirt to class.

He called anyone who would join the armed force "the fuckin' lowest of the low." He disparaged students' relatives who might be serving as not the brightest of the bunch, and he said to be fair, he encouraged them to stay in school and go to college.

But it wasn't just a philosophical exercise — it was a tirade. And it's not the first time Salcido has been in similar hot water. Twice before this he has been suspended from teaching, once for hitting a student and once for threatening violence to another. The school board was right to fire him. There are plenty of good teachers waiting in the wings who can keep their personal opinions to themselves.

Move ups cost of debt service The Washington Post

The Federal Reserve announced an increase in its benchmark interest rate on March 21, from 1.5 percent to 1.75 percent, the highest level since the Great Recession began in 2008. The first such hike of new Fed Chairman Jerome Powell's tenure, it was expected and represented continuity with the plans and policies of his predecessor, Janet Yellen. Under Powell, it appears, the Fed's bank expects continued strong growth and feels it can keep unwinning the super-low interest rates and other crisis measures adopted a decade ago.

Most commentary on this prudent step, likely to be the first of at least three this year, has focused on what it might portend for the bond markets, which have been growing and feels it can keep unwinning the super-low interest rates and other crisis measures adopted a decade ago.



CHRIS PIZZELLO/AP

Gregory Salcido addresses the public during a City Council meeting in Pico Rivera, Calif., last month. Salcido, a history teacher who was videotaped telling his students that only dumb people join the U.S. military, has been fired by his school district.

inevitable, but the Fed's low interest rates were made easier to finance.

Now, Fed policy will have the effect of raising federal debt service costs. Indeed, this was already foreseeable at the time the Republican Congress enacted, and President Donald Trump signed, a massive new tax cut — making that trillion-dollar-plus bill doubly fiscally irresponsible. A recent report from the Center for a Responsible Federal Budget, based on Congressional Budget Office interest rate assumptions, projected that total interest costs could rise from \$263 billion (1.4 percent of gross domestic product) in 2017 to \$1.05 trillion (3.6 percent of GDP) in 2028.

This does not necessarily mean that the debt is becoming unsustainable and of itself (though that can't be ruled out). Even after losing the implicit support of the Fed, the federal government enjoys many advantages over ordinary debtors, including the power to print the currency it borrows. What is happening, however, is that the eventual costs of correcting today's financial excesses are rising. And the margin for error in federal finances is fast disappearing. Interest payments are legally binding; they must be made lest the United States default on its obligations and trigger a global financial crisis.

It's worth noting, too, that other things being equal, government interest payments tend to flow upward in society's pyramid of wealth, for the simple reason that people of modest means have less savings available to invest in bonds than rich people do. There's nothing progressive about that, which is one of many reasons that Americans across the ideological spectrum should be protesting Congress' recent bipartisan abandonment of fiscal discipline. In its own quiet, indirect way, that was the message the Fed just sent, too.

Russian envoys deserved boot (Minneapolis) Star Tribune

The Trump administration deserves credit for expelling 60 Russian diplomats (spies, actually, claimed the White House) and for closing the Russian Consulate in Seattle, which is near a U.S. naval base.

The decisive diplomatic moves were in response to allegations that the Russian government used the nerve agent Novichok to poison a former spy and his daughter who are now living in the United Kingdom.

The March 4 poisoning, which Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz correctly called an "unprecedented attack on civilians with the use of a chemical weapon, unseen in Europe since World War II," was just the latest Russian affront to the West.

Russian President Vladimir Putin —

who won last week's sham election — has denied the poisoning, just as he professes innocence in the attacks against other Western individuals and institutions, including elections. Putin must be held to account for his thuggery.

The Trump administration's latest response was well-coordinated with Western allies. At least 16 European Union nations (so far) announced plans to expel Russian diplomats, or spies as some allege. Canada and Ukraine made similar moves. All this follows Britain's expulsion of 23 Russians, setting off the ongoing diplomatic row.

"The United States and many of our friends are sending a clear message that we will not stand for Russian misconduct," Nikki Haley, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said.

The message wasn't nearly as clear as recently as last week, when President Donald Trump ignored the advice of his aides and congratulated Putin for his election victory while failing to mention the poisoned spy.

Monday's moves make amends for that mistake and reflect a unified Western approach that had been the hallmark of every U.S. president in the postwar era. Trump, conversely, has often challenged allies more than he has adversaries like Russia.

That's something that Trump should keep in mind as he mulls his next move on the multinational Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action — the Iran deal. This isn't a U.S.-Iran bilateral pact but one that was coordinated in part by the European Union and one in which Britain, France and Germany — as well as Russia and China — were party to. Trump not only risks a new nuclear-arms race in the most volatile region in the world, but risks alienating allies who are expected to stick with the pact even if the U.S. walks away.

Multilateralism is the best method to contend with spiraling crises worldwide. The president would be wise to reflect upon his coordinated Russian response and replicate the close cohesion it represents.

Trump forced N. Korea to act The Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle

We were among many who pushed back against President Donald Trump when he shockingly warned last August that future threats from North Korea would be met with "fire and fury like the world has never seen."

We said then, and we still believe, that such rhetoric is reckless and makes the world a more dangerous place.

We're itching to be proven wrong. Fact is, he may do it.

It's hard not to conclude that it was Trump's tough talk — and the belief internationally that he just might follow

through on his vow — that has led not only to rapprochement between North and South Korea at the latter's recent Olympic games, but also to an announced summit this spring between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

For decades, presidents have no doubt been advised not to dignify a North Korean dictator with a bilateral meeting. We would've advised the same, frankly.

But everything has changed, from Pyongyang's proximity to nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, to Kim's sudden charm offensive — and, most markedly, to a U.S. president audacious enough to take on the challenge.

Plus, we are told the summit sometime before May at an undisclosed location will take place without an easing of the U.S. sanctions stranglehold — and without further ballistic missile tests by Pyongyang.

One cautionary note, and it's a huge one: We'd have to trust that Trump won't fall prey to North Korea's historic cat-and-mouse game — also played for years by Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein — of agreeing to good behavior in return for concessions, then breaking agreements at every turn.

Still, any reason for hope must be pursued with the speed of a downhill skier.

The announced summit brought instant hope and praise.

After several rounds of sanctions, Chinese cooperation, and last year's stunning unanimous U.N. crackdown on Pyongyang, The Washington Post's Aaron Blake wrote, that "through it all, Trump has gotten credit for real progress on the North Korea threat, including from some critics."

"He does deserve credit," Blake quoted Trump detractor Ian Bremmer as saying.

"I think North Korea's openness in the Obama administration," Blake wrote, as well as potentially direct talks with the U.S., are the result of Trump's approach."

Go ahead, Mr. President. Make our day.

Take deep look in Sacramento The Sacramento (Calif.) Bee

Outrage over the police shooting of Stephen Clark is not likely to go away soon, but Sacramento Police Chief Daniel Hahn has been smart to seek transparency. On Tuesday, he brought in California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to provide independent oversight of the investigation into the unarmed black man's death. It was the right call.

Clark was shot to death within seconds of being charged into his grandparents' backyard earlier this month by two Sacramento police officers who appeared not to identify themselves. Since then, distrust has been in the air, from Clark's family announcing it would hire its own medical examiner to do an independent autopsy to attacks by Black Lives Matter and others on Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert.

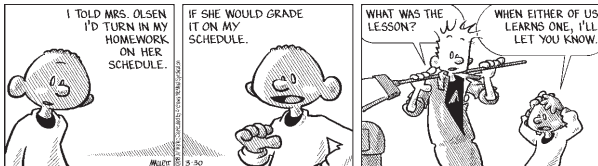
Such concerns are neither uncommon nor unfounded with officer-involved shootings. Prosecutors work side by side with local law enforcement, and civil rights advocates for years have complained that having district attorneys investigate use-of-force cases carries with it an inherent conflict of interest.

Bringing in Becerra will go a long way toward rebuilding public trust, and will help ensure unbiased scrutiny of the case. But the county also has generated and pledged to examine the police department's policies and procedures, as a whole, another critical piece of any solution.

In 2015 and 2017, Sacramento Assemblyman Kevin McCarthy introduced legislation that would have given the state attorney general the authority to investigate allegations of officer-involved shootings. Both bills died in committee.

McCarthy plans to reintroduce the bill this year. Perhaps Becerra will show more interest. Given the law on police shootings, doing right by the public isn't easy. But the county's approach can be a model in California.

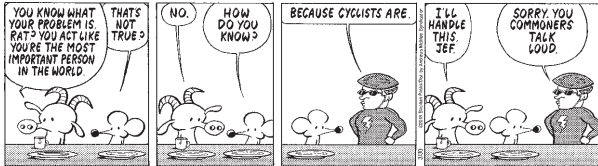
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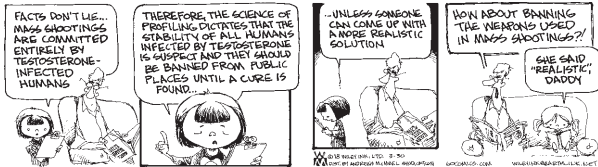
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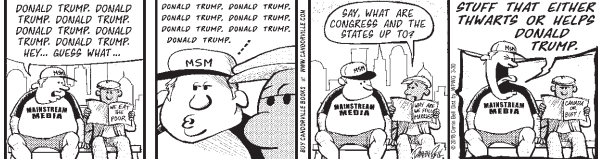
Pearls Before Swine



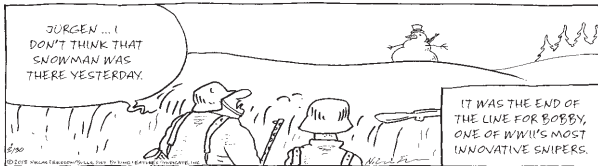
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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12				13					14			
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46				47					48			
49				50					51			

ACROSS

- Candy-heart word
- Hamlet, e.g.
- Corp. leaders
- Bikini top
- Mr. Stravinsky
- Pearl Harbor site
- Cushy job
- Party cheese
- Verdon or Stefani
- Bravely
- You're looking at them
- Ggo yachting
- Frost
- Childish
- Bruins legend
- Cybermessages
- Scale member
- Foot treatment at a spa
- Pop
- Lion's share
- Some kind of a nut
- Whimsically witty
- Peacekeeping org.
- "It can't be!"
- Sales rep's handout
- Jupiter counterpart
- Armonstan man
- "Crying" singer
- Orbison

DOWN

- Surmise direction
- Troubles
- Observe
- Scale abbr.
- Neither mate
- Cutting edge
- Cuts into cubes
- "Son of —"
- Before
- Blue hue
- Grey tea
- Toledo's state
- Litigant
- Pitcher
- Test tube
- Karate blow
- 21 Traditional tales
- 22 Brainy
- Grenoble girlfriend
- Radio host Don
- Traveling shows for GIs
- Took the train
- Airline to Tel Aviv
- Earth sci.
- "Can you give me directions?"
- Eve's third son
- Supports
- Take a nap
- Actress
- Perلمان
- Burden
- Zilch
- Upscale auto
- Aussie hopper
- Shad product
- Storm center

Answer to Previous Puzzle

B	O	S	C	W	E	R	M	U	S	H
U	T	A	H	I	C	U	A	P	S	E
Y	O	G	I	L	O	G	P	H	E	W
S	E	E	F	I	T	A	B	L	E	
				F	A	S	T	B	R	E
T	A	L	O	N	O	O	V	A	T	
O	L	I	N	I	S	O	J	A	N	E
M	A	V	I	N	C	S	A	L	E	M
B	R	E	A	K	F	A	S	T	S	
			I	D	E	A	L	E	M	O
P	E	T	A	N	E	E	I	L	I	E
G	L	U	M	C	A	D	N	A	L	A
A	M	P	S	Y	R	S	E	V	E	R

3-30

CRYPTOQUIP

H X U C E X M L J T T E S S N E
G U Z F J T M Z U E X O I U J Q E F C O D
N Z O I U Z C T M L U E Q
M G Z C U H Z M J M : G N J
V Z O C M G J U V Z O C M N J U .
Yesterday's Cryptquip: I ARRIVED AT THIS
LOCALITY ONLY BECAUSE NOVELIST HUNTER
HAS BIDDEN ME TO COME. I AM EVAN-SENT.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: G equals T

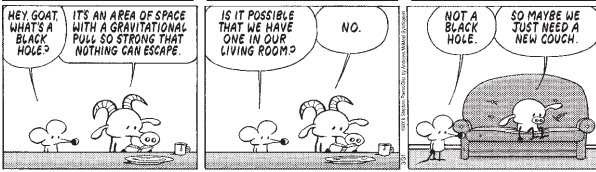
Frazz



Dilbert



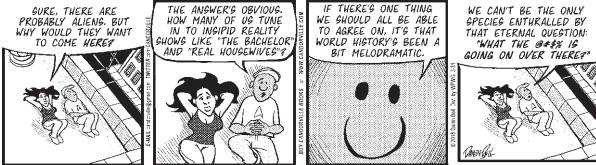
Pearls Before Swine



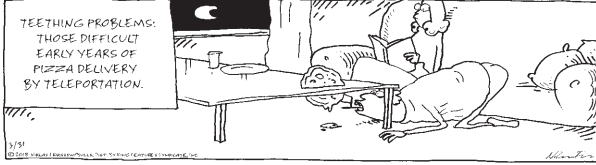
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



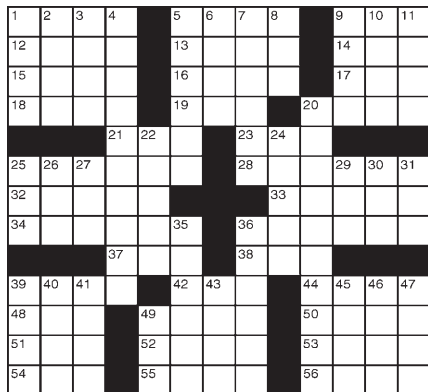
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

- 1 Gator's kin
- 5 Bygone Peruvian
- 9 NFL's Jaguars, on scoreboards
- 12 "Be quiet ..."
- 13 Linguist
- 14 Not 'neath
- 15 Vogue rival
- 16 Paper towel brand
- 17 Madrid Mrs.
- 18 "Love — Leave Me"
- 19 Tramcar contents
- 20 "Hey, sailor!"
- 21 D.C. stadium initials
- 23 Nile biter
- 25 Sock pattern
- 28 Walk very quietly
- 32 Lathered up
- 33 Beethoven's "Für —"
- 34 Offer unwanted advice
- 36 Broad street
- 37 Dove's call
- 38 — Moines
- 39 Flirt's signal
- 42 Doo follower
- 44 Taj Mahal city
- 48 Altar vow
- 49 Faction

DOWN

- 51 Sun. talk
- 52 Two of a kind
- 53 Inlet
- 54 Shriner of tennis monarch
- 55 Teen's woe
- 56 Rams fans?
- 22 Jet off for
- 24 Strainer
- 25 Request
- 26 Marseilles
- 27 Prattle
- 29 Can material
- 30 Buckeyes' sch.
- 31 Shoe width
- 32 Signs from above?
- 36 Stick
- 39 Trace
- 40 Notion
- 41 Standard
- 43 Tennis score
- 45 Get bigger
- 46 Carry on
- 47 Pub orders
- 49 Hotel amenity

Answer to Previous Puzzle



3-31

CRYPTOQUIP

KH MBTIB EM CROI ZIEWDO
EMFIEUIB, ZIZAIBO MC EUI
ZKDKEWBJ GBMAWADJ ROI
OMDTKIBKHF KBMHO.
Yesterday's Cryptquip: CURIOUS FELLOW WHO TRAVELS AROUND REMOVING HANDRAILS FROM STAIRCASES: THE BANISTER BANISHER.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: Z equals M

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Announcements 040

Automotive 140

Autos for Sale - Germany 142

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SCOREBOARD

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College basketball

NIT
Championship
Thursday, March 29
Utah (23-11) vs Penn State (25-13)

CIT
Semifinals
Wednesday, March 28
UIC 67, Liberty 51
Northern Colorado 99, Sam Houston State 80

Championship
Friday, March 30
UIC 20-15, vs. Northern Colorado (25-12)

CBI
Championship Series (Best-of-three)
Wednesday, March 28
San Francisco 72, vs. North Texas 62
Friday, March 29
North Texas 69, vs. San Francisco 55
Friday, March 30
San Francisco (22-16) at North Texas (19-18)

Women's NIT
Semifinals
Wednesday, March 28
Indiana 71, TCU 58
Virginia Tech 64, West Virginia 61
Championship
Saturday, March 31
Virginia Tech (23-13) vs. Indiana (22-14)

WBI
Championship
Thursday, March 29
Yale (18-13) at Central Arkansas (25-9)

College baseball

Wednesday's scores
EAST
Cairn 4, Penn St.-Brandywine 2
Cornell 10, Mount Mercy 6
Vassar 10, Old Westbury 4
Washington & Lee 10, Monmouth, p.p.d.
MIDWEST
Bryan 10, South Methodist 8
St. Louis 10, vs. North Dakota 0
Emory & Henry 8, Ferrum 5
Florida Gulf Coast 10, Miami 0
Greensboro 9, Guilford 8
Milligan 9, Kentucky Christian 0
Notre Dame 2, Kent St.
Tusculum 6, Belknap 1
VCU 11, Virginia 3

Tennis

Miami Open
Wednesday
At The Tennis Center at Grand Park
Purse: Men, \$7.7 million (Masters 1000);
Women, \$7.7 million (Premier)
Surface: Hard-Outdoor
Men
John Isner (14), United States, def. Chung Hyeon (19), South Korea, 6-1, 6-4, 6-3
Juan Martin del Potro (6), Argentina, def. Milos Ranic (20), Canada, 5-7, 1-6, 7-6 (3)
Women
Jelena Ostapenko (6), Latvia, def. Elina Svitolina (4), Ukraine, 6-4, 6-3
Danielle Collins, United States, def. Venus Williams (8), United States, 6-2, 1-6, 7-6 (3)
Doubles
Karen Khachanov and Andrey Rublev, Russia, def. Oliver Marach, Austria, and Mate Pavic (3), Croatia, 6-4, 7-6 (3)
John Isner and Sam Querrey, United States, def. Juan Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah (8), Colombia, 6-3, 6-4
Bob and Mike Bryan (4), United States, def. Raven Klaasen, South Africa, and Michael Venus, New Zealand, 3-6, 7-6 (5), 10-8
Men
Ben McLachlan, Japan, and Jan-Lennard Struff, Germany, def. Nikola Pietrangeli, Netherlands, def. Rafael Nadal, United States, and Anna-Lena Groenewald, Germany, 6-3, 7-6 (5)

Women
Ashleigh Barty, Australia, and Coco Vandeweghe, United States, def. Nadia Kichenok, Ukraine, and Anastasia Rodionova, Australia, 6-4, 6-3
Elise Mertens, Belgium, and Demi Schuurs, Netherlands, def. Rachel Atkins, United States, and Anna-Lena Groenewald, Germany, 6-3, 7-6 (5)

College hockey

NCAA Tournament
NORTHEAST REGIONAL
At Worcester, Mass.
First Round
Saturday, March 24
Boston University 3, Cornell 1
Michigan 3, Northeastern 1
Championship
Saturday, March 25
Michigan 6, Boston University 3
EAST REGIONAL
At Bridgeport, Conn.
First Round
Friday, March 23
Notre Dame 4, Michigan Tech 3, OT
Providence 1, Clarkson 0
Championship
Saturday, March 24
Notre Dame 2, Providence 1
MIDWEST REGIONAL
First Round
Saturday, March 24
Ohio State 4, Princeton 2
Denver 5, Penn State 1
Championship
Sunday, March 25
Ohio State 5, Denver 1
SOUTHERN REGIONAL
At Sioux Falls, S.D.
First Round
Friday, March 23
Air Force 4, St. Cloud State 1
Minnesota Duluth 3, Minnesota State 2
Championship
Saturday, March 24
Minnesota Duluth 2, Air Force 1
FROZEN FURY
At St. Paul, Minn.
Saturday, March 24
North Dakota 6, St. Cloud State 5
Friday, April 5
Ohio State (26-9) vs. Minnesota Duluth (23-16)
Notre Dame (27-9) vs. Michigan Tech (22-14)
National Championship
Saturday, April 7
Semifinal winners

Boxing
Fight schedule
March 31
At Principality Stadium, Cardiff, Wales.
Anthony Joshua vs. Joseph Parker, 12, for Joshua's WBA and IBF super middleweight titles; Alexander Povetkin vs. David Price, 12, heavyweight; Ryan Beyer vs. Yonny Perez, 12, for Beyer's WBA bantamweight title; Josh Kelly vs. Carlos Molina, 10, welterweight; Joe Cordina vs. Andy Townsend, 10, lightweight.
At Quincy, Mass.
Mick DeLuca vs. Michael Moore, 10, junior middleweights.
At Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas
Jarrett Hurd vs. Erlandura Lara, 12, IBF-WBA junior middleweight titles; Caleb Truax vs. Nathan Aspinall, 12, for Truax's IBF super middleweight title; Juan Williams vs. Juan Carlos Gallardo, 12, junior middleweights.
At San Juan, Puerto Rico
Angel Acosta vs. Ryohei Hara, 12, for Acosta's WBO junior flyweight title.
At Greyhound Racetrack & Casino, Calgary
Michael Faresant vs. Guadalupe Rosales, lightweight.
April 12
At Fantasy Springs Casino, Indio, Calif.
Francisco Vargas vs. Rod Salda, 10, junior lightweight.
At Sands Bethlehem Event Center, Bethlehem, Pa.
Edwin Fernandez vs. Dennis Galarraga, 10, super featherweights.
At The Armory, Minneapolis
James vs. Abel Ramos, 10, welterweights.
April 14
At The O2, London
Billy Joe Saunders vs. Liam Murray, 12, for Saunders' WBO middleweight title; Terry Fancutt vs. Marvin Hinkle, 12, for the vacant WBO super lightweight title; Darryll Williams vs. Kevin Clarke, 10, super middleweights.
At Las Vegas, Jerwin Ancales vs. Jonathan Ortiz, 12, for Ancales' IBF junior bantamweight title.
April 15
At Yokohama, Japan
Ryota Murata vs. Felicio Blaudun, 12, for Murata's WBO World middleweight title; Daigo Higa vs. Christopher Chibana, 12, for the vacant WBO flyweight title; Ken Shiro vs. Ganigan Lopez, 12, for Shiro's WBC junior flyweight title.
April 21
At Barclays Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Adrien Broner vs. Jessie Vargas, 12, for Broner's WBC super featherweight title; Terence Crawford vs. Jorge Linares, 12, for Crawford's WBO super lightweight title; Gervonta Davis vs. Jesus Cuellar, 10, super middleweight; Jarrell Miller vs. Johann Dupaupis, 12, heavyweight.
April 22
At T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas, Genadi Golovkin vs. IBF-WBA-WBC middleweight titles.

Pro soccer

MLS
EASTERN CONFERENCE
W L T Pts GF GA
Columbus 1 0 0 3 10 8
New York City FC 3 1 0 10 8 3
New York 1 0 0 3 7 6
Atlanta United 1 0 1 4 2 0
Philadelphia 1 0 1 4 2 0
New England 1 0 1 4 2 0
Montreal 1 2 0 3 4 5
Orlando City 0 2 1 1 2 5
Chicago 0 2 0 0 1 3
Toronto FC 2 0 0 0 0 3
WESTERN CONFERENCE
W L T Pts GF GA
Sporting KC 2 1 1 7 9 9
Seattle 2 1 0 7 9 6
Los Angeles FC 2 0 0 6 6 5
Minnesota United 1 2 0 5 5 2
FC Dallas 1 0 2 3 5 2
Houston 1 0 1 3 4 3
LA Galaxy 1 1 1 4 3 3
Real Salt Lake 1 1 1 4 3 3
San Jose 0 0 1 1 1 3
Colorado 0 0 1 1 1 3
Portland 0 0 0 0 0 0
Seattle 0 2 0 0 0 4
Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday, March 30
Real Salt Lake at Toronto FC
Saturday, March 31
New York City FC at Atlanta City
Los Angeles FC at LA Galaxy
Vancouver White Sox at Portland
Portland at Chicago
Atlanta United at Minnesota United
New York City FC at San Jose
D.C. United at Sporting Kansas City
New England at Houston
Philadelphia at Colorado
Montreal at Seattle
Friday, April 6
Montreal at New England
Saturday, April 7
Houston at New York
Los Angeles FC at Atlanta United FC
San Jose at Philadelphia
D.C. United at Toronto FC
Chicago at FC Dallas
Columbus at Chicago
Vancouver at Real Salt Lake
Sunday, April 8
Portland at Orlando
Sporting Kansas City at LA Galaxy
Wednesday, April 4
Real Salt Lake at New York City FC
Friday, April 13
Orlando City at Philadelphia
Los Angeles FC at Vancouver

Auto racing

Monster Energy NASCAR Cup Series
Schedule and winners
Feb. 11 — X-Advance race at Texas Clash, Daytona Beach, Fla. (Brad Keselowski)
Feb. 15 — X-Cam-Ann Day 1, Daytona Beach, Fla. (Kevin Harvick)
Feb. 15 — X-Cam-Ann Day 2, Daytona Beach, Fla. (Robby Gordon)
Feb. 18 — Daytona 500, Daytona Beach, Fla. (Kevin Harvick)
Feb. 25 — Folds of Honor QuikTrip 50, Hampton, Ga. (Kevin Harvick)
March 4 — Pensacola 400, Las Vegas (Kevin Harvick)
March 11 — Toyota/Save Mart 350, Sonoma, Calif. (Kevin Harvick)
March 18 — Overtone's 400, Joliet, Ill. (Kevin Harvick)
July 7 — Coke Zero 400, Daytona Beach, Fla. (Kevin Harvick)
July 14 — Quaker State 400, Sparta, N.C. (Kevin Harvick)
July 22 — New Hampshire 301, Loudon (Kevin Harvick)
July 29 — Gander Outdoors 400, Long Pond, N.Y. (Kevin Harvick)
Aug. 5 — Go Bowling at The Glen, Watkins Glen, N.Y. (Kevin Harvick)
Aug. 12 — TBA Brooklyn, Mich. (Kevin Harvick)
Aug. 14 — Bass Pro Shops 400, Bristol, Tenn. (Kevin Harvick)
Aug. 19 — Coca-Cola 600, Concord, N.C. (Kevin Harvick)
May 27 — Coca-Cola 600, Concord, N.C. (Kevin Harvick)
June 3 — Pocono 400, Long Pond, Pa. (Kevin Harvick)
June 10 — FireKeepers Casino 400, Pontiac, Mich. (Kevin Harvick)
June 24 — Toyota/Save Mart 350, Sonoma, Calif. (Kevin Harvick)
July 1 — Overtone's 400, Joliet, Ill. (Kevin Harvick)
July 7 — Coke Zero 400, Daytona Beach, Fla. (Kevin Harvick)
July 14 — Quaker State 400, Sparta, N.C. (Kevin Harvick)
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GOLF/HIGH SCHOOL:DODEA PACIFIC

On the fringe

Bring on the Masters

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

Consider this another tradition unlike any other. Two or three or more of the best players win tournaments in the months leading to April, golf fans hear the familiar, soothing notes of "Augusta" in TV spots and declare that this is shaping up to be the best Masters of them all.

No doubt, enough has happened in 12 weeks to start counting the days.

Dustin Johnson started the year with an eight-shot victory that featured a 432-yard drive on a 433-yard hole. He remains at No. 1 in the world. Two players have had a mathematical chance to replace him, most recently Justin Thomas, who was one match away.

Phil Mickelson, a three-time Masters champion, won a World Golf Championship for his first victory in nearly five years. Bubba Watson, a two-time Masters champion, had not won in two years and now has won twice in his last four starts.

The career Grand Slam became a popular topic again when Rory McIlroy won the Arnold Palmer Invitational, his first victory in 18 months. This will be his fourth attempt to become the sixth player to capture all four majors. The other three were not particularly close.

One other element to this Masters: Tiger Woods.

He is generating the bulk of the buzz, and Woods hasn't even won yet.

So yes, the Masters can't get here soon enough.

Excitement over the Masters typically gives the spring air a sweeter aroma. Part of that is having to wait so long since the last major. Part of that — a big part — is that the Masters rarely



PHILAN M. EISENHACK/AP

After Tiger Woods opened with a 68 at the Arnold Palmer Invitational, he became the 8-1 favorite in Vegas to win the Masters.

disappoints.

But is that much different from a year ago?

Look at the landscape in 2017. Jordan Spieth won big at Pebble Beach and had never finished worse than runner-up in three Masters. Thomas shot 59 set a PGA Tour scoring record for 72 holes and swept Hawaii to begin his emergence as the next young star. Hideki Matsuyama was on a roll. Jon Rahm was just getting started. Rickie Fowler won again. And then Johnson found another gear and won three straight tournaments.

And then Sergio Garcia won his first major in his 20th year as a pro.

The difference now is that picking a favorite now is like picking a favorite hole at Augusta National. The Westgate Las Vegas Superbook most recently had Woods, Thomas, McIlroy and Johnson at 10-1. Spieth and Justin Rose were 12-1. Watson was right behind at 14-1, followed by Mickelson and Day at 16-1.

If it seems crowded at the top, consider what brought us to this point.

■ Westgate had Woods at 50-1 for the Masters right before he returned to competition the first week of December in the Bahamas.

■ Johnson won Kapalua by eight shots for his eighth victory in his last 34 careers, all against some of the strong fields.

■ Rahm ended 2017 by winning the European finale in Dubai, was runner-up at Kapalua and won the CareerBuilder Challenge. With a chance to go to No. 1 in the world at Torrey Pines, he went from a one-shot deficit after 36 holes to a 75-77 weekend. Woods made the cut at Torrey Pines with a two-putt birdie from 70 feet on his last hole. He tied for 23rd, exceeding expectations.

Masters odds go to 20-1. Day won Torrey Pines in a playoff for his first victory in 20 months. ■ Johnson finished second at

Pebble Beach to Ted Potter Jr., who has missed every cut since then. Imagine if Johnson had won Pebble. He would have two wins this year, nine in his previous 36 starts. He would still be the clear favorite at Augusta.

■ Watson won at Riviera for the third time, his first PGA Tour victory in two years. Woods missed the cut at Riviera. His Masters odds go to 25-1.

■ Thomas didn't have his best stuff and still won the Honda Classic with a clutch wedge and a 5-wood. Woods, seven shots behind going into the final round, finished 12th. Masters odds for Woods went to 16-1.

■ Mickelson — won Mexico Championship in a playoff over Thomas, who holed a wedge from the fairway for eagle on the 18th hole. Mickelson had eight straight years of top 10s at the Masters. He expects to do well there. Everyone does.

■ Woods is runner-up at the Valspar Championship by one shot. Johnson and Thomas are co-favorites at 8-1. Woods is now 10-1.

■ Woods opened with a 68 at Bay Hill, one off the early lead. As he played his back nine, Westgate announced he is the Masters favorite at 8-1. "A lot of gamblers out there," Woods says after the round. McIlroy birdies five of the last six holes to win Bay Hill.

■ Thomas was one match away from getting to No. 1 in the world when he lost 3 and 2 to Watson in the semifinals of Match Play. Watson won for the second time in his last four events.

"In the end it might be a good thing going to Augusta without that," Thomas said of the No. 1 ranking. "I get to go to what I was going to do and let DJ have all that pressure."

Except Johnson won't have all the pressure, not with so many favorites — including Woods.

Especially Woods.



DAVE ORNAUER/Stars and Stripes

Kubasaki sophomore Elizabeth Joy, Okinawa's reigning district cross country champion, is one of three league cross country champions set to run the 1,600-meter race in the 14th Mike Petty Memorial Track and Field Meet on Friday at Kubasaki High School on Okinawa.

Weekend peek

Top competitors head to Petty meet

By DAVE ORNAUER
Stars and Stripes

They're each the reigning girls cross country champions in their respective districts. One of them — Taryn Cates-Beier of Nile C. Kinnick — won the Far East meet title last October.

Now, seniors Cates-Beier and Emma Sheedy of Guam and sophomore Elizabeth Joy of Kubasaki are set to square off in the 1,600-meter run during Friday's 14th Alva W. "Mike" Petty Memorial Meet at Joy's home Kubasaki track.

It's a rare chance for three athletes possessing strong running cadence to square off during an in-season meet that for some is a dress rehearsal for the Far East track meet May 21-23 at Yokota. "I'm really excited," said Sheedy, the reigning Guam 400 and 800 champion who for a brief time last season held the island records in the 800 and 1,500.

The Petty meet could serve dual purposes for her. Guam's season doesn't start until next month, so it's a preseason meet for her. And since Guam doesn't compete in Far East it's Sheedy's only chance to compete against DODEA Pacific athletes.

Friday will be her first time running the 1,600 in competition and her first time running against Joy or Cates-Beier.

"My workouts haven't changed; I'm just mentally preparing for an extra 100 meters," said Sheedy, whose top 1,500 time is 5 minutes, 59 seconds. She set her 1,500 time on March 17 in the top time for DODEA Pacific runners so far this season and she also leads in the 800 field with a 2:28.73.

"It's like preparation for Far East. You're running in closer to that temperature. And it will be nice to see Elizabeth again." Joy's 5:41.39 in the 1,600 is third in DODEA Pacific, and she's second in the 800 with a 2:29.45. "I feel very confident," Joy said. "I feel like I've been doing really well and pushing myself more. I'm ready for the competition."



DEANGELO GALANG/Special to Stripes

Reigning Far East cross country champion Taryn Cates-Beier will run the 1,600 in Friday's Mike Petty Memorial Meet.

Though only 10 athletes are coming from off-island — nine from Kinnick — for this edition of the Petty meet, they are strong in their respective disciplines, according to their records.

Cates-Beier's distance teammates and training partners Erin Stonebarger, a senior, and Rissa Eilmes, a sophomore, are entered. Stonebarger's 2:33.21 is third in DODEA Pacific in the 800, while Eilmes' 12:24.53 is second in DODEA Pacific in the 3,200.

Kinnick senior Isaiah Brown leads DODEA Pacific in the 200 (23.27 seconds) and 400 (51.66). He'll face strong challenges from Okinawa speedsters Eric McCarter and Javonte Morris of Kadena and Keonte Caines and Vincent Hill of Kubasaki, all in the DODEA Pacific top 10.

Kinnick senior Exotica Hall, the two-time reigning Far East high jump champion and record holder in the event, will square off against Kubasaki's Ja'Tavia Callier. Hall's 5-foot-1 leads DODEA Pacific; Callier is next at 5-0 1/4.

Callier will also face off against Kinnick junior Sontti Sesay in the hurdles. Callier's 15.39 tops DODEA Pacific in the 100 hurdles, with Sesay third in 17.66. Callier is second in the 300 hurdles at 48.61, behind reigning Far East champion Britney Bailey of Yokota (48.14).

"I'm excited to see how my times compare with theirs," Callier said.

The Petty meet begins at 9 a.m. Friday at Mike Petty Stadium.

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ERIC GAY/AP

Rory McIlroy will make his fourth attempt to become the sixth golfer ever to win a career Grand Slam when the Masters begins April 5.

NHL

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Tampa Bay	76	51	21	4	106	273	217
x-Boston	75	47	17	11	105	249	194
Washington	77	46	24	7	99	243	225
Toronto	77	46	24	7	99	261	219
Pittsburgh	77	43	28	6	92	253	238
Philadelphia	76	39	35	2	84	234	232
Columbus	77	43	29	5	91	222	211
New Jersey	76	40	28	8	88	229	228
Florida	75	39	29	7	85	229	228
Carolina	77	39	31	7	79	215	244
N.Y. Rangers	77	33	35	9	75	233	248
N.Y. Islanders	77	32	34	11	69	246	270
Montreal	77	26	37	12	68	196	245
Detroit	77	28	38	11	67	199	239
Los Angeles	76	35	39	11	63	207	270
Buffalo	76	24	40	12	60	177	250

Western Conference

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Nashville	76	49	16	11	109	245	193
x-Winnipeg	75	47	19	10	104	255	209
x-Vegas	77	48	22	7	103	256	208
San Jose	76	47	23	6	100	246	219
Minnesota	76	42	24	10	94	233	215
St. Louis	76	43	28	5	91	212	198
Los Angeles	77	42	28	7	91	224	190
Anaheim	77	39	25	13	91	218	208

Note: Two points for a win, one point for a tie. Los Angeles, St. Louis and Anaheim are tied for third in the Western Conference. The teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

x-clinched playoff spot

Tuesday's games

N.Y. Islanders 4, Carolina 3
N.Y. Islanders 4, Ottawa 3
New York Rangers 4, St. Louis 3
Winnipeg 5, Boston 4, SO
St. Louis 3, San Jose 2, OT
Nashville 2, Minnesota 1, SO
Dallas 3, Philadelphia 2, OT
Columbus 7, Edmonton 3
Vancouver 4, Anaheim 1

Wednesday's games

Toronto 4, Florida 3
Washington 3, N.Y. Rangers 2, OT
Philadelphia 2, Colorado 3
Arizona 3, Vegas 2

Thursday's games

Detroit at Buffalo
Tampa Bay at Boston
Pittsburgh at New Jersey
Florida at Ottawa
San Jose at Nashville
Dallas at Minnesota
Winnipeg at Chicago
Columbus at Calgary
Edmonton at Vancouver
Arizona at Los Angeles

Friday's games

Carolina at Washington
Toronto at N.Y. Islanders
Washington at N.Y. Rangers
Chicago at Colorado
Los Angeles at Anaheim
St. Louis at Vegas

Saturday's games

Florida at Vegas
Ottawa at Detroit
Nashville at Vancouver
N.Y. Islanders at New Jersey
N.Y. Rangers at Carolina
Montreal at Pittsburgh
Winnipeg at Toronto
Minnesota at Dallas
Buffalo at Nashville
Anaheim at Arizona
Edmonton at Calgary
San Jose at Vegas

Sunday's games

Boston at Philadelphia
Nashville at Tampa Bay
New Jersey at Montreal
Washington at Pittsburgh
Colorado at Anaheim

Leaders

Goal scoring

Name, Team	GP	G
Alex Ovechkin, Washington	76	46
Patrick Laane, Winnipeg	76	43
Eugen Malkin, Pittsburgh	73	42
William Karlsson, Vegas	77	40
Connor McDavid, Edmonton	77	40
Eric Staal, Minnesota	76	39
Anders Lee, N.Y. Islanders	77	39
Tyler Segin, Dallas	77	39
Nikita Kucherov, Tampa Bay	74	38
Nathan MacKinnon, Colorado	69	38
James van Riemsdyk, Toronto	76	35
Anze Kopitar, Los Angeles	77	34
Taylor Hall, New Jersey	71	33
Brad Marchand, Boston	61	33
John Tavares, N.Y. Islanders	77	33
Logan Couture, San Jose	73	31
Sean Couturier, Philadelphia	74	31
Sean Monahan, Calgary	74	31

Plus/Minus

Name, Team	GP	+/-
William Karlsson, Vegas	77	42
Jonathan Marchessault, Vegas	74	35
Reilly Smith, Vegas	66	32
Brad Marchand, Boston	61	31
Dustin Brown, Los Angeles	76	28
Yanni Gourde, Tampa Bay	76	28
Victor Hedman, Tampa Bay	71	27
Patrice Bergeron, Boston	57	26
Jonas Brodin, Minnesota	67	26
Zdeno Chara, Boston	68	26
Sean Couturier, Philadelphia	74	26
Josh Manson, Anaheim	75	26
Charlie McAvoy, Boston	63	26
Patrick Nemeth, Colorado	69	26
Matt Niskanen, Washington	63	26
Alexander Wennberg, Columbus	62	25
Anton Stralman, Tampa Bay	74	25
Brayden McNabb, Vegas	71	23

Around the league

Some teams can't win for losing

2015 Draft hasn't made much of an impact on the standings

By JOHN WAWROW

Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. Jack Eichel has difficulty accepting the sorry state of the Buffalo Sabres, who haven't had a sniff at the playoffs in the three years since his celebrated arrival.

"When I got drafted, if you would've said we'd be in this position, I probably would've told you to give your head a shake," Eichel told The Associated Press.

Instead, it's the 21-year-old shaking his head in disbelief over a franchise that's finished no better than 14th in the Eastern Conference since 2012-13 and is in jeopardy of finishing last in the overall standings for the third time in five years.

This isn't what anyone — from since-fired GM Tim Murray to Sabres fans encouraging the team to tank — were anticipating during the 2014-15 season. That's when Buffalo was in a race to the bottom for the right to draft one of the two touted, generational prospects: Eichel and Connor McDavid, who was selected first overall by Edmonton.

What's worse for Eichel is seeing other teams jumping ahead of Buffalo in the rebuilding process.

"You look at Colorado and some of these teams, New Jersey, that make a quick turnaround and all of a sudden they're in the playoff hunt," he said.

If misery likes company, the

Sabres aren't the only ones stuck in a rut.

Whatever watershed moment the 2015 draft was supposed to represent by infusing game-changing talent to the NHL's neediest teams, it has yet to make more than a ripple in the standings.

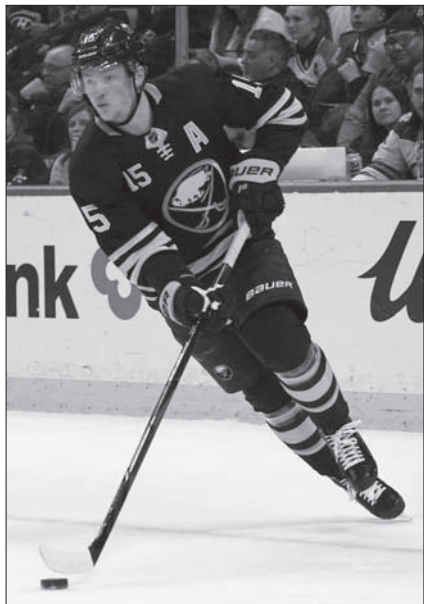
Eichel hasn't made a dent in the Sabres' fortunes despite averaging nearly a point a game. For all of McDavid's offensive exploits and earning NHL MVP honors last season, the Oilers will miss the playoffs for the second time in his three years.

Instead, the 2015 draft serves as a cautionary example of how bottoming out doesn't guarantee instant turnarounds.

With the exception of Toronto, three of the teams, including Arizona, with top-five selections in 2015 have already been eliminated from this year's playoffs, and a fourth, Carolina, could join them soon.

So much for the tanking tent held by several NHL executives, who thought the best way to build a champion was to start by losing big.

Pittsburgh did that in building its three most recent Stanley Cup champion teams with two No. 1 draft picks (Sidney Crosby and goalie Marc-Andre Fleury) and a No. 2 (Evgeni Malkin). Chicago's three most recent Cup winners followed the Blackhawks selecting Jonathan Toews with the No. 3 pick in 2006 and Patrick Kane No. 1 the following year.



JEFFREY T. BARNES/AP

Three years after being drafted second overall, Sabres forward Jack Eichel is still waiting to experience his first postseason.

And yet, there are exceptions. Detroit won four titles from 1997 to 2008 despite not drafting higher than No. 19 from 1992 to

2013. Boston has had a top-10 pick just twice in 10 years.

Just look at the NHL expansion Vegas Golden Knights, who have clinched a playoff berth and are leading the Pacific Division with a team cobbled together from scratch.

Holland's future

Red Wings GM Ken Holland told The AP he has received no assurances from the team he'll return for a 21st year, despite reports indicating he will be back.

MLive.com on Tuesday cited an unnamed person in reporting Holland will be back "with or without a contract." The Detroit Free Press quoted a person familiar with the situation saying "he's going to be back as the GM," but reported it's unclear how Holland's contract will be structured.

Holland, in a text to The AP, declined to discuss whether he'd return without a contract, saying: "I'll talk when the final decision has been made."

Game of the week

Top spot in the overall standings could be on the line Sunday, when the Western Conference-leading Predators travel to play East-leading Tampa Bay.



JASON FRANSON, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Edmonton's Connor McDavid was named the league's MVP last season and guided the Oilers to the playoffs. This season, however, the Oilers will miss the playoffs for the second time in three years.

MLB

Teams walk fine line between rebuilding, tanking

Taking long-term view can pay off, but also invites skepticism

By NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

Spring training was just starting for the Pittsburgh Pirates under a splendid Florida sky. It was the time of year when any team can feel optimistic, but on this morning, the team was still coming to terms with an offseason shakeup. Stars Andrew McCutchen and Gerrit Cole had been traded, and Josh Harrison — one of the team's top remaining players — was talking through his concerns with reporters.

"You just want to know where we stand as a team, where you stand as a player — what's expected of you, what's expected of the team. Sometimes that gets lost in translation, the human side of this game," Harrison said. "We all want to win. I'm not saying nobody wants to win, but when you feel it's not the main goal of everybody, whether it's in the clubhouse or dealing with the organization, that's hard to be a part of."

Later that day, general manager Neal Huntington held his own session with the media, saying of course the Pirates want to win — and indicating they weren't planning any sort of drastic roster teardown. But this offseason, Pittsburgh was one of a handful of teams facing a bit of a backslash.

Rebuilding — or, to use the less euphemistic term, tanking — has become one of baseball's most polarizing topics in 2018. When the Astros won the World Series last season, four years after a 111-loss debacle, they became a shining example of how short-term pain can lead to long-term gain, but as other teams try to follow Houston's lead, they're being met with varying degrees of skepticism.

Even from one of the key members of the champion Astros.

"It's a hard path to follow, I think. Both the Cubs and ourselves, we had some really good players in house. It's not easy to just hit on draft picks year after year," Houston left-hander Dallas Keuchel said recently. "Some of these teams you're going to see crumble because it's not going to work for everybody."

When the Astros won the World Series, it wasn't just a victory for Houston. It was a victory for those who embrace patient rebuilding — or, to steal a line from Philadelphia 76ers fans, a victory for trusting the process.



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

The Pirates' Ivan Nova pitches to the Tampa Bay Rays during a spring training game last week in Bradenton, Fla. Pittsburgh general manager Neal Huntington insists his team is playing to win this season, but trades of star players Andrew McCutchen and Gerrit Cole suggest that the team is in the midst of what could be a long-term rebuild.

From 2011-13, the Astros lost 106, 107 and then 111 games. Attendance dropped, but that awful stretch yielded high draft picks — and a chance to work with a clean slate with minimal financial commitments.

Now Houston has a championship, plus a core of players in their 20s who could keep this team in contention for years. The Astros' blueprint worked.

"If you have a longer-term perspective, it probably makes some sense," said Sandy Alderson, general manager of the New York Mets. "The greatest deterrent to that

strategy in the past were the fans, and the fans have become more knowledgeable, more appreciative of farm systems, and they have a longer-term view as well. So at least with respect to some period of time, fans have accepted the [idea] that that's the best way to get better in the long run."

Rebuilding isn't a new phenomenon, of course. Some teams have little choice, like the Phillies when their stars declined earlier this decade. Or the Tigers, who have faced a similar predicament of late.

"We had to go all-in in a full rebuild. I think the majority of people understood that," Detroit general manager Al Avila

'It's a hard path to follow, I think. ... It's not going to work for everybody.'

Dallas Keuchel

Astros pitcher, on the difficulties of engaging in a full-scale rebuild such as the one undertaken by Houston, which went from 111-game losers in 2013 to World Series champions last year

said. "I think the majority of people wanted that — wanted to see that. I think the shock came when it became true."

Detroit has credibility with fans after spending big for a decade. Payroll is a touchier subject in Miami. The Marlins have won two World Series but are probably best known for dismantling their roster with alarming frequency.

A new ownership group in Miami is under pressure to show the future will be different, but this past offseason felt like more of the same. The Marlins slashed payroll, trading slugger Giancarlo Stanton to the Yankees.

With the season now starting, Commissioner Rob Manfred can hope the reality on the field will calm concerns about any proliferation of rebuilding teams.

"I looked a year ago about what people were saying about who was trying to win," Manfred said. "If you go back and look at the newspaper articles at that time, you will find articles saying that Arizona, Colorado, Milwaukee and Minnesota all did not do enough during the offseason to try to win."

All four of those teams contended for the postseason, and three of them made it.

But this offseason certainly felt different. In February, the players' union filed a grievance against the Pirates, Marlins, Athletics and Rays, accusing them of failing to spend revenue-sharing money appropriately. Major League Baseball said it believed the complaint was without merit, but trust is clearly in short supply.

Now it feels newsworthy when a team has a poor season and doesn't hit the reset button.

"There's a few teams, I think, whose fan base might not allow it, and I hope that we're one of those teams," Toronto left-hander J.A. Happ said. "It should be that way. You should be trying to contend and be a part of it every year. I'd happy to be on a team that's anxious to do that."

Minnesota, Hughes hope injuries are a thing of the past

By MAUREN MOLLEN
Associated Press

FORT MYERS, Fla. — Minnesota Twins pitcher Phil Hughes prefers to focus on the future. Besides, lingering on his injury-plagued past might be too painful.

Yet coming off three straight seasons that didn't go as planned, Hughes finds himself slowed again this spring.

The 31-year-old righty trained his right oblique muscle March 22, a week before opening day, and will begin the season on the disabled list.

"He hasn't caught a lot of breaks," manager Paul Molitor said. "He came up here and pitched his butt off that first year, he was rewarded for it. But since that time, it's been hard for him to

stay on the mound."

"Some of it's certainly out of his control and with the thoracic outlet thing and he got smoked by that line drive," he said.



Molitor

Molitor said that Hughes is "still in the mix" to pitch April 11, the first time Minnesota will need a fifth starter. Hughes got off to a good start for the Twins. He joined them in 2014 and went 16-10 with a 3.52 ERA, walking only 16 in 209 1/3 innings.

As a reward, the Twins gave

him a five-year, \$58 million contract, and he was their opening day starter the next season.

Since then, he's 16-19 with a 5.04 ERA in 53 appearances, including 45 starts.

In 2015, he was limited by back problems. In 2016, he suffered a fractured left femur after being hit with a line drive, then underwent his first surgery for thoracic outlet syndrome. A second procedure for the same condition came last year, ending his season on July 18.

Hughes said he doesn't want to spend time looking back.

"The 'why me?' No, not really," Hughes said. "It's one of those things, I try not to dwell on the past or anything like that. Every step of this process has been a new challenge. So I try not to feel sorry for myself."

"It's just a matter of trying to get back and I feel like I can do that. It's just a matter of hoping my body holds up and arm strength is there. But I try not to think that way at all," he said.

Hughes had been expected to claim the fifth spot in the Twins rotation, or, at the very least, a spot in the bullpen.

He was enjoying the competition, he said, relishing the fact it made his spring more productive and focused.

Now his situation is less certain. Molitor is cautiously optimistic Hughes will return to a mound soon, once his oblique injury heals.

"I haven't been given a grade of how severe," Molitor said. "I think there's some optimism that it won't be long before he's pitching again. I'm talking maybe

days, even. But that puts us in a bind, too."

"We don't have the answers. I wish I had more. I don't like the feeling that we're kind of hanging up here on a few people," he said.

Hughes had been on track to be at the end of Minnesota's rotation before hurting himself last week.

With Hughes to be put on the DL by opening day, winter meetings draft pick Tyler Kinney and Gabriel Moya both are expected to be part of the bullpen for the initial 25-man roster.

The Twins leave Fort Myers on Monday morning for an exhibition game against the Nationals in Washington on Tuesday, before opening the season in Baltimore on Thursday.

MLB

Santana's influence goes beyond stats

Veteran counted on by Phillies to provide clubhouse leadership

By ROB MAADDI
Associated Press

CLEARWATER, Fla. — Carlos Santana's influence on the Philadelphia Phillies goes beyond stats.

The team agreed to a \$60 million, three-year deal with the slugger in December to bolster the lineup and provide leadership in the clubhouse. Santana knows what it takes to be a winner and has been mentoring his new teammates in spring training.

"I try to help them mentally," Santana said. "The younger players are asking me a lot of questions. Every player is different but I try to help them be patient, pick the right pitch to hit. I tell them my approach. I think in the future, you'll see it from them."

Many of the younger players already gravitate toward Santana.

"Carlos's influence has spread throughout this clubhouse but it's also spread to the coaches' room," new manager Gabe Kapler said. "We can depend on him as a leader to send messages to our players, especially with our Spanish speakers."

Santana spent his first eight seasons in Cleveland. He batted .259 with 23 home runs, 79 RBIs and a .363 on-base percentage last year.

The switch-hitting first baseman has batted .249 with a .365 on-base percentage and has averaged 24 homers, 81 RBIs and 98 walks in his big league career. His patience at the plate was an attractive quality for Philadelphia. His versatility is also a nice fit. Santana has batted leadoff 122 times in his career while mainly hitting fourth or fifth in the lineup. He hit second in Philadelphia's final spring training game Tuesday and is likely to start the season in the two hole.



LYNNE SLADKY/AP

The Phillies signed Carlos Santana away from Cleveland in December, counting on the veteran slugger to provide leadership.

"He can hit anywhere and we can move him around," Kapler said. "When you have a guy right in the middle of the lineup grinding down the opposing pitcher, you get exhausted. An exhausted starting pitcher or even an exhausted reliever is a really good thing for the Phillies."

Santana said he doesn't care where he bats.

"I just want to be in the lineup every day and I'll do whatever they want," he said. "I love to play, it's my passion, my job and I try to enjoy it."

Santana's locker in spring training was

next to that of Maikel Franco, a player who can benefit from a more selective approach. Franco has only 108 walks in 1,646 plate appearances and had a .281 on-base percentage in 2017.

"I have Carlos by my side, and I think that's going to help me a lot," he said.

Back with Rockies, Gonzalez a force and a mentor

By JOSE M. ROMERO
Associated Press

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Carlos Gonzalez smiled at the thought of being back with the Colorado Rockies.

Gonzalez spent nine seasons with the Rockies, becoming a three-time All-Star. He left as a free agent after the World Series, then returned to the Rockies in mid-March with a \$5 million, one-year contract — a huge cut from his previous deal for \$80 million over seven years.

"It was very different than in years past, my first time in free agency," the 32-year-old Venezuelan outfielder said Friday, speaking in Spanish. "There were a lot of good players sweating it out, and everyone knows how it all went down, but the most important thing is to be able to get back to playing baseball."

Gonzalez learned some things about the business side of baseball during a free-agent market that was the slowest since the end



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Carlos Gonzalez is about to play his 10th season for the Rockies.

of the 1994-95 strike.

"Really glad to be back here again," Gonzalez said. "Not many players have the opportunity to be with the same team for a decade."

Gonzalez hit .221 with just six home runs and 22 RBIs in the

first half of last season but batted .314 with eight home runs and 35 RBIs after the break. He was 2-for-5 with an RBI in the Rockies' NL wild-card game loss to Arizona.

Gonzalez is projected to play right field and hit in the middle of

a batting order that includes NL batting champion Charlie Blackmon, former NL batting champion DJ LeMahieu and Nolan Arenado.

"Some of the guys called me during the offseason and told me they missed me," Gonzalez said. "I just try to put up good numbers and try to be a good teammate, and really my main goal is to help those guys become superstars, like Nolan, DJ, Blackmon, (Trevor) Story. These are all guys I have watched grow from the first year they were here."

Gonzalez is beloved in Denver, popular and respected in the Rockies clubhouse. Teammates were outspoken about the void created by his absence at the outset of spring training.

"At the end of the day, the most important thing is that my teammates showed me they care. It definitely makes me feel good," Gonzalez said. "I've spent many years in a place that welcomed me with open arms from the start."

Gonzalez is more than happy to

mentor the younger Rockies.

"He's a really good player and veteran, and a good person, too," outfielder Raimel Tapia said in Spanish. "He helps me with defense and batting because he's done it well his whole career. He's always really happy and full of energy, and he tells me I'm going to be good if I work hard."

The mentoring part comes from inspiration from accomplished big leaguers such as Carlos Beltran, from whom Gonzalez sought advice during the free agency period.

"Like they say, 'Pass the baton,'" Gonzalez said.

Rockies manager Bud Black says Gonzalez brings both a competitive and calming influence.

"His presence here makes us a better team, first and foremost, on the field, if he plays like he's very capable of playing," Black said. "He's a guy that connects with all the members of the team, so there's a leadership there that goes beyond what he does on the field."

NBA

Raptors content to fly under postseason radar

Toronto closing in on top seed

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

They do things differently in Toronto. When it's time for NBA public-address announcers to introduce the starting lineup before games, the Raptors don't wait to hear their names called. The starters simply huddle up for a quick chat while their backups gather a few feet away and use a basketball to play volleyball — bumping and setting it to each other before someone spikes a dunk.

They're laughing. They're loose. And they don't mind if few are noticing.

These are happy times for the Toronto Raptors, who kept their stars and coach together even after a string of playoff flameouts and are seeing that continuity rewarded. If they win three of their final eight games, they'll break the franchise single-season record of 56 victories. And they're in position to go into the Eastern Conference playoffs as the No. 1 seed for the first time, entering Thursday with a 3 game lead over No. 2 Boston.

"I feel like we have something special that is a well-kept secret," Raptors coach Dwane Casey said.

Canada's lone NBA team doesn't seem to move the needle much in the United States. The Raptors are No. 2 leaguewide in wins so far this season, but the NBA doesn't list them among the top 10 in merchandise sold. They're led by dynamic All-Star guards Kyle Lowry and DeMar DeRozan, and their jerseys aren't in the league's 15 best-sellers either. Toronto hasn't even been tapped for one of the 10 Christmas Day spots on the NBA schedule.

The upcoming playoffs, though, are where the Raptors can make their noise.

This is the fifth consecutive year where Toronto will be playoff-bound, matching the total from the Raptors' first 18 seasons combined. But the recent playoff trips haven't gone as planned, with only three



FRANK GUNN, THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Despite being No. 2 leaguewide in wins so far this season, the Raptors don't get the same attention as teams from major media markets in the United States. All-Star guard DeMar DeRozan, pictured, has led Toronto to the playoffs for a fifth consecutive year, matching the total from the Raptors' first 18 seasons combined.

series wins, a home Game 7 loss and getting swept twice.

"We fell," DeRozan said. "You could turn around and make big changes. But we stuck through it and understood the mistakes and where we needed to be better."

This spring could be different for the Raptors. This team is the best-scoring group in franchise history, about to smash the team record set last season. They're third in the NBA in three-pointers made, second in the

NBA in blocked shots. They're 15-4 in the games immediately following a loss, and they've had four separate winning streaks of six games or more.

The overwhelming majority of attention from the outside goes to Golden State, Houston, Cleveland and Miami. Around the league, though, some applaud that the Raptors had a plan and let it take root.

"When you're constantly dealing with change, good luck," Spoelstra said. "But

'I feel like we have something special that is a well-kept secret.'

Dwaine Casey
Toronto Raptors coach

that's a great lesson. What you're seeing is great stability from ownership and the front office, great vision and maturing to understand they're a lot closer than they are far away and if you start over you're going way back. Just by bringing that whole group back and tweaking a few things, they've gone from good to great."

The core players — DeRozan, Lowry and Jonas Valanciunas — are the constants. The Raptors are enthralled with their young players like Fred VanVleet, Delon Wright and Jakob Poeltl. The off-entigmatic Serge Ibaka has been steady, and veteran C.J. Miles has been a steadying influence in Toronto's second unit.

Ask the Raptors, and they think it's a perfect mix.

"We can't play for other people's opinions and thoughts," DeRozan said. "As long as we go out there and play and do what we know how to do, all that will speak for itself at the end of the day."

The credit will really come if Toronto goes deep in the playoffs.

The Raptors haven't been in the NBA Finals yet, and made the East finals only once. But these are magic times in Toronto: The Maple Leafs are going to the Stanley Cup playoffs, the Blue Jays are about to start their season, Toronto FC is the reigning MLS champion, and the Toronto Argonauts will defend the Grey Cup when the CFL season starts.

"It's a good time to be in Toronto," Lowry said. "Just got to get the warmer weather." The Finals are in June. It's plenty warm then.

76ers' painful 'Process' ultimately led to playoffs

By DAN GELSTON
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Robert Covington dunked Marshall Meeks over the head with cups of water, a basketball baptism of sorts for a rookie No. 1 pick who already needed a career rebirth.

Fultz had the Philly sports world buzzing and was trending on social networks when his return was casually dropped by coach Brett Brown about 90 minutes before tipoff. Fultz got a standing ovation when he checked in to a game for the first time in five months, then promptly airballed his first jumper. But



Fultz

by the fourth quarter, the chants for "Fultz! Fultz! Fultz!" were so loud, the 76ers rookie briefly thought that perhaps Super Bowl MVP and Eagles QB Nick Foles was in the house.

This was a different kind of Philly Special.

The Sixers have made a giant leap from the painful "Process" to the postseason that has 50 wins and home court advantage firmly in sight over the final nine games.

All-Star Joel Embiid and rookie of the year favorite Ben Simmons are headed to the playoffs — and they're bringing Fultz along on the ride.

The 19-year-old Fultz had seemingly been lost for the season because of a sore right shoulder that may or may not have caused a case of the yips in a shooting form that would be heavily dissected around NBA circles.

Coach Brett Brown said over the weekend it would take Fultz telling the Sixers that he was ready to play, a significant sign that Fultz was in fact healthy enough to hit the court, but perhaps not mentally prepped to slip on the No. 20 jersey.

For whatever reason, Fultz decided Monday he was ready to go. Perhaps the difference came on Sunday, an off day — the Sixers had officially clinched their first playoff berth since 2012.

With seeing the only uncertainty down the stretch, time was running low to see what potential role Fultz could have in the postseason. He came back with an uneven performance including his airball and a few shots blocked, but he flashed a confident, attacking game in the lane that finished with 10 points and eight assists in 14 minutes in a win over Denver.

It was Fultz's first game since Oct. 25 and his fifth career NBA game.

"He showed signs of why he was the first

player chosen," Brown said. "Obviously, the game is fast and it's elite at this stage and that's a good team but the night could not have worked out better."

What came next was as perplexing as some of the theories floated as to why Fultz had lost his shot. Fultz spoke for the first time since his media blackout started in October.

He gave a couple of non-answers to two questions about his shoulder and had no substance in his answer about why he was able to play on Monday.

What happened next put Fultz on high-light reels — and got him ripped on national TV — for more than his play.

Did he do something to hurt his shoulder or just feel soreness?

Fultz rubbed his face and stared straight without talking and grabbed a towel someone tossed him. His wiped his face during a few more seconds of awkward silence.

Pressed again about the injury, Fultz simply stared blankly ahead.

Teller is chattier during a magic act.

Here were a couple of other big zeroes from Fultz: He did not attempt a three-pointer (he hasn't this season) and did not shoot a free throw. His foul shooting form was ridiculed in the preseason and there was no immediate sign his mechanics were fixed.

But a healthy and mentally straight

Fultz could be the final piece that helps the Sixers earn the No. 4 seed in the Eastern Conference and get a first-round home court edge.

The Sixers have won seven straight games, 18 of 19 at the Wells Fargo Center and their 43 wins are the most since they won the same number in 2003-04. They won 48 games in 2002-03 and last hit the 50 mark (56) in their 2000-01 NBA Finals run.

Yes, Brown — who has a 10-win season and 26- and 28-game losing streaks on his resume — is finally able to lead a playoff run.

"It means it's the first sort-of real-time thing we can touch to feel that we're moving in the direction that we all want," Brown said. "That reward for doing those types of things that says, 'now you're in the playoffs,' is the first step toward what I expect there to be many more steps. We're here to win a championship."

The Sixers host the lowly New York Knicks on Wednesday, exactly the kind of game they need to win to hold serve on their seed and perhaps stretch Fultz's playing time.

"It's kind of a risk coming back, especially when the team is playing well and we have to include him," Embiid said.

The season has already been a success. How long it lasts just may depend on the tightheaded No. 1 pick with that shaky shot.

NBA

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Toronto	55	20	.733	—
x-Boston	52	23	.693	3
x-Cleveland	45	30	.600	10
x-Philadelphia	44	30	.595	10½
x-Indiana	44	31	.587	11
Washington	43	33	.564	13½
Milwaukee	40	36	.523	15
Milwaukee	39	35	.527	15½

Detroit	34	40	.459	20½
Charlotte	32	42	.447	21½
New York	27	49	.355	28½
Chicago	24	50	.324	30½
Brooklyn	24	51	.320	31
Orlando	22	52	.297	32½
Atlanta	21	54	.280	34

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
y-Houston	61	14	.813	—
y-Golden State	50	20	.730	6½
Portland	46	29	.613	15
Oklahoma City	44	31	.587	17
San Antonio	43	32	.573	18
New Orleans	43	32	.573	18
Minnesota	43	33	.566	18½
Utah	42	33	.560	19

L.A. Clippers	41	34	.547	20
Denver	40	35	.531	21
L.A. Lakers	33	41	.446	27½
Sacramento	24	51	.320	37
Dallas	23	52	.307	38
Memphis	21	54	.280	40
Phoenix	19	57	.250	42½

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

Tuesday's games
Washington 116, San Antonio 106
Toronto 114, Denver 110
Houston 118, Chicago 88
Miami 98, Cleveland 79
Portland 107, New Orleans 103
Dallas 103, Sacramento 97
Indiana 52, Golden State 81
L.A. Clippers 105, Milwaukee 98

Wednesday's games
Brooklyn 111, Orlando 105
Cleveland 118, Charlotte 105
Philadelphia 118, New York 101
Memphis 108, Portland 103
Minnesota 126, Atlanta 114
Boston 97, Utah 94
L.A. Clippers 111, Phoenix 99
L.A. Lakers 103, Dallas 93

Thursday's games
Washington at Detroit
Chicago at Miami
Oklahoma City at San Antonio
Indiana at Sacramento
Milwaukee at Golden State

Friday's games
Chicago at Orlando
Philadelphia at Atlanta
Denver at Oklahoma City
New Orleans at Cleveland
Phoenix at Houston
Minnesota at Dallas

Saturday's games
Milwaukee at L.A. Lakers
Detroit at Washington
Toronto at Boston
Brooklyn at Sacramento

Sunday's games
Philadelphia at Charlotte
Houston at San Antonio
Indiana at L.A. Clippers
Washington at Chicago
Dallas at Cleveland
Orlando at Brooklyn
Oklahoma City at New Orleans
Orlando at Atlanta

Monday's games
Milwaukee at Denver
Chicago at Golden State
Sacramento at L.A. Lakers

Leaders

	PTS	REB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	FG	FT	PTS	REB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV
Harden, HOU	66	50	574	205	307	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Davis, NOR	68	715	442	1924	28.3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
James, LEB	74	565	689	2068	27.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Anteokummp, MIL	69	690	459	1879	27.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lillard, POR	67	571	444	1795	26.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Murray, GSW	60	620	313	1294	26.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Westbrook, OKC	73	694	378	1853	25.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Curry, GSW	54	455	559	1242	24.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Irving, BOS	60	534	232	1466	24.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DeRozan, TOR	74	603	336	1726	23.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dragic, IND	69	587	281	1603	23.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Aldridge, SAN	68	618	308	1570	23.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Walker, CHA	74	565	689	1695	22.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Embiid, PHI	63	610	359	1445	22.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wade, MIA	68	607	287	1577	22.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Williams, LAC	74	548	403	1681	22.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Butler, MIN	56	417	340	1243	22.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Embiid, PHI	74	620	359	1615	21.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Griffin, DET	72	523	293	1557	21.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
George, OKC	58	478	259	1242	21.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Rebounds

	PTS	REB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV
Drummond, DET	72	369	775	1144	15.9	—
Jordan, LAC	70	726	462	1928	15.4	—
Wade, MIA	75	716	689	1925	15.3	—
Towns, MIN	76	720	709	929	12.2	—
Anteokummp, MIL	69	690	459	1879	12.1	—
Kanter, NYK	71	273	507	780	11.0	—
Capela, HOU	68	224	534	745	11.0	—
Embiid, PHI	74	620	359	1615	11.0	—
Jokic, DEN	68	183	530	713	10.5	—
Anteokummp, MIL	69	145	545	690	10.0	—



CHUCK BURTON/AP

The Hornets' Kemba Walker reacts to making a three-point basket against the New York Knicks during overtime on Monday in Charlotte, N.C. Walker became the franchise's career leading scorer on Wednesday, passing Dell Curry with 9,841 points.

'He's a great story'

Hornets' Walker has fan in owner Jordan, but not strong supporting cast

By STEVE REED
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Hornets owner Michael Jordan probably wishes he had a few more players like Kemba Walker. Perhaps then his team might be a regular NBA playoff contender.

The hard work. The passion. The dedication.

They are all qualities that Jordan said Walker possesses and led the point guard to become the franchise's career scoring leader on Wednesday night.

"He exemplifies what it means to be a Hornet," Jordan said in a statement.

Walker scored 21 points to pass Dell Curry with 9,841 points on a night LeBron James scored 41 points to help the Cavaliers cruise to a 118-105 win over Charlotte.

Walker may not be as tall or possess the same leaping ability as Jordan, a six-time NBA champion, but he does play with the same all-out intensity and desire to win that His Airness did when he was winning titles for the Chicago Bulls.

The problem is Walker just doesn't have nearly the supporting cast that Jordan did in his heyday.

The Hornets are on the verge of failing to make the playoffs for the fifth time in seven seasons since Walker arrived in 2011. It's hardly his fault, as he's developed into a two-time All-Star and a dominant scorer who's averaging better than 20 points per game the last three seasons while improving his shooting percentage each year.

"His effort, leadership and commitment to our team and the City of Charlotte is second to none," Jordan said.

Walker's hard work has not gone unnoticed.

'I'm about working, getting better and proving people wrong.'

Kemba Walker
Charlotte Hornets

James — who tied Jordan's record by scoring in double figures for the 866th consecutive game — said Walker has earned the respect of players around the league, even though the Hornets haven't been a consistent playoff contender.

"Listen, if you can be the all-time leading scorer in any franchise, that's incredible," James said. "That's an incredible feat. I definitely went over and just told him how incredible that was. Even though with the season that they're having, when accomplishments happen throughout the season, you try not to take them for granted."

Walker was emotional after the game, needing a towel to wipe away tears after he was interviewed on the court in front of an applauding crowd at the Spectrum Center — a rare deviation from the impenetrable New York City toughness he always displays on the court.

But after retreating to the locker room, Walker sat at his locker with his head down while still upset over the loss.

"That's one thing that has allowed him to become the great player that he is," Hornets coach Steve Clifford said of Walker's distaste for losing.

Clifford said it would be hard to find a player who has improved as much as Walker over the past three seasons.

"He's a great story," Clifford said.

Walker became emotional because he started to remember what all of the doubters said along the way. He said that he "wasn't supposed to be here."

"There were doubts when I got drafted," Walker said. "I've seen plenty of articles and things like that I probably wouldn't be an elite point guard. I wanted to prove people wrong. And when I got my first contract, they said I was overpaid. I proved them wrong again. That's what I'm about. I'm about working, getting better and proving people wrong."

Given the changing landscape of the NBA, the four-year, \$48 million contract Walker received in 2015 now looks like an incredible bargain. If he continues to play at this level — and there is no reason to suspect he won't — he could receive a max contract following the 2018-19 season.

Walker said he would like to stay in Charlotte, but he noted that he also wants to win.

The Hornets have lost in the first round of the playoffs in Walker's previous two postseason appearances, and the man who won a national championship in college at Connecticut is growing tired of watching the playoffs on television.

The big question will be if Jordan decides the Hornets need to blow things up and use Walker as a bargaining chip in trade talks, or whether the team should continue to try to build around the 27-year-old point guard.

Jordan created a stir earlier this year by saying he would trade Walker at the right price, but then held onto him instead of sending him to Cleveland or elsewhere.

"I've always been committed to this place," Walker said. "This is where I got my start. This is where I've grown as a man, as a person and as a basketball player. I don't think it will be up to me. We'll see."

WOMEN'S NCAA TOURNAMENT



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Connecticut poses with the regional championship trophy after beating defending champion South Carolina on Monday in Albany, N.Y.

UConn still the favorite

By DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

Even among the elite in women's college basketball, UConn stands out.

The Huskies are back in the Final Four for an 11th straight season, breaking a tie with John Wooden and the UCLA men's program for the Division I record. UConn beat defending national champion South Carolina 94-65 on Monday night to earn the trip to Columbus, Ohio.

Notre Dame, Louisville, Mississippi State — all outstanding programs — will try to block UConn's path to a fifth national title in six seasons.

"I think the field is maybe the strongest I've seen in a long, long time, maybe ever," UConn coach Geno Auriemma said on Tuesday. "And the fans are in for a treat. I don't know if the coaches are, but certainly the fans are in for a treat."

All three of the other teams may be capable of knocking off the Huskies, but there's no doubt Auriemma's group is a huge favorite. UConn has won 147 of its past 148 games going back nearly four full seasons.

The only loss during that span was against Mississippi State in overtime during the national semifinals last season. Morgan William hit a jumper at the buzzer in overtime that ended UConn's 111-game winning streak.

But even the Bulldogs can appreciate how special UConn's run of 11 straight Final Fours has been.

"It's a level of excellence never before seen in the game of basket-

ball, not just women," Mississippi State coach Vic Schaefer said.

UConn (36-0) will face Notre Dame (33-3) in one national semifinal while Mississippi State (36-1) plays Louisville (36-2) in the other game on Friday. All of the four teams are No. 1 seeds, which is just the fourth time in tournament history that's happened.

UConn has dominated the women's game so thoroughly the past several seasons that some have questioned if it's bad for the sport. Louisville coach Jeff Walz dismissed that line of thinking.

"No, it's not bad for the game," Walz said. "Nobody was saying when John Wooden was winning 10 in a row and all that stuff that UCLA was bad for the men's game. It's really just a shame that people can't enjoy and appreciate how good they are. I mean, it's pretty darn impressive."

A few more things to watch at the women's Final Four in Columbus:

Recruiting to UConn: When reflecting on UConn's 11 straight Final Fours, Auriemma said one of the hardest parts of maintaining success is recruiting the right players who can handle the expectations: "You come to Connecticut, and you look up on those walls when you come to our practice facility, and you look around and you go, all right, well, I'm going to be here four years. Well, what in God's name can I accomplish that hasn't already been done? If you're in awe by that, then you're not going to be successful here and we're not going to be successful."

Facing McCowan: Mississippi

State's 6-foot-7 Teaira McCowan — who was a third team AP All-American — has been outstanding for the Bulldogs during the NCAA Tournament.

She had 23 points and 21 rebounds against UCLA in their Elite Eight win. Walz said facing McCowan on Friday will be a huge challenge: "I'm hoping (Mississippi State coach Vic Schaefer) decides to drive the bus and makes a wrong turn somewhere. So if we can have that happen, I'll feel much better."

The good and the bad: Mississippi State is often remembered for its upset win over UConn in the Final Four last season. What is less remembered is that in 2016, the Bulldogs had a terrible experience against the Huskies, losing 98-38 in the Sweet 16. Schaefer ruefully recalled that day when discussing UConn's excellence. "You know, they talk about their offense and how good it is, but let me tell you, they are really good defensively. Trust me. I got held to 38 one time."

Notre Dame's unlikely run: Notre Dame might be the most unlikely Final Four participant of this year's quartet. The Irish were a No. 1 seed despite losing four players over the season to knee injuries. Said coach Muffet McGraw: "We keep shaking our heads. I think I'm kind of torn between crying and laughing. It means so much. There's so much emotion because of what we've been through. The resilience of this team, how they just are relentless in pursuit of their goal. They didn't ever quit or question whether or not we could do it."

Gamecocks ponder future minus Wilson

By PETE IACOBELLI
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Dawn Staley believes South Carolina can continue to build on the success the women's basketball program has had because of the foundation that All-American A'ja Wilson leaves behind.

The 6-foot-5 Wilson, the three-time Southeastern Conference player of the year who became the school's career leader in points, blocks and rebounds this season, is graduating. Her departure creates a huge void Staley will have to fill after South Carolina's season ended with a disheartening 94-65 drubbing against undefeated UConn in the regional finals Monday night.

"There won't be a whole lot of A'ja Wilsons left in our game," Staley said. "I'm just really fortunate that I got a chance to coach her for four years."

That doesn't mean Staley's expectations for the program will be any different.

But without Wilson — the likely national player of the year — South Carolina might have to take a step back after winning its fourth straight league tournament title earlier this month.

Wilson was the last of South Carolina's big four that included Alaina Coates, Kaela Davis and Alisha Gray who helped drive the Gamecocks to four consecutive SEC regular season titles from 2014-17. Now, it will be a new-cloak group who'll have to carry Staley's program forward.

Point guard Tyasha Harris and forward Alexis Jennings, if she remains, will have to take another leap forward for that to happen.

Harris was a freshman starter on South Carolina's national title team who had the luxury of riches when passing to scores all over the floor that season. She will have to find someone other than Wilson (who made 58 percent of her shots this past season) to become a reliable scorer next year.

Jennings, the 6-9 Kentucky transfer, averaged 11 points a game this season, but often had stretches filled with missed shots and inconsistent performances.

Jennings had seven points in the NCAA Tournament opener against North Carolina A&T, then just two rebounds in 22 minutes in the next win over Virginia.

Jennings could opt to go pro instead of return. She said Monday she has not decided what she'll do.

South Carolina's most consistent young player was freshman guard Bianca Jackson, who played 30 minutes a game and led the Gamecocks with 41 three-pointers.

South Carolina expected to be more productive from the outside, but shooting guard Bianca Cuevas-Moore missed all season with a knee injury and Penn State grad transfer Lindsey Spann played only 15 games because of knee problems.

A wild card for next year's team is Tennessee transfer Te'a Cooper. The Gamecocks were denied a waiver by the NCAA to get Cooper on the court this season and she's spent the year practicing and preparing. Cooper made the coaches' all-SEC freshman team two seasons ago before sitting out 2016-17 with a knee injury.

A healthy Cooper could perk up South Carolina's scoring prospects.

The Gamecocks have a pair of top-50 recruits for next season in point guard Destanni Henderson of Florida, and 6-1 forward Victoria Sexton of Georgia.

Staley will have her hands full molding the new group — all of it without Wilson.

Even with Wilson, Staley said the team had its doubters along the way.

The Gamecocks did stumble this past season as players who were expected to fill roles after the Gamecocks' national championship never really found their place around Wilson. That led to the Gamecocks (29-7) getting knocked out of the NCAA Tournament earlier than they had hoped.

Still, Staley took pride in what her team accomplished when she said many expected the Gamecocks to fall off after their title run.

"They just played it out and we just found ourselves in a place in which only us believed that we could be," Staley said.



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

South Carolina's A'ja Wilson, right, shoots over UConn defenders on Monday. The Gamecocks face the tough task of filling the void left by Wilson — the likely national player of the year.

NCAA WOMEN'S TOURNAMENT



Young Kwak/AP

Notre Dame forward Kathryn Westbeld kisses the tournament trophy after the Irish beat Oregon 84-74 in the Spokane Regional final of the NCAA Women's Tournament, in Spokane, Wash. Westbeld will be returning to her home state when Notre Dame faces Connecticut in the semifinals of the Final Four.

Notre Dame's Westbeld returns home for semis

By JOHN FINERAN
Associated Press

ASOUTH BEND, Ind. — About five hours after returning to Notre Dame after winning the Spokane Westbeld limped Tuesday into her business class at Notre Dame — quantitative decision modeling.

No one would have blamed the 6-foot-2 senior forward if she had made her way to the back of the room to find a seat and get more sleep.

"I should have, but I was front and center," Westbeld laughed a little more than 14 hours after she scored 20 points to lead the top-seeded Irish to an 84-74 win over Oregon on Monday night, earning a trip to the Final Four.

Now the senior post player will see her collegiate career come to an end in Columbus, Ohio, a 75-minute trip from her hometown of Kettering, where she led Fairmont High School to a state championship.

"My family has been blowing up my phone trying to get tickets," Westbeld said. "It means the world to me to be able to go home for my last games here at Notre Dame."

The fact that Westbeld is even still playing after spraining her ankle is a bit of a miracle. She wears a walking boot on her left foot after injuring it in the opening round of the NCAAAs.

Westbeld didn't start the first

Scoreboard

Women's Final Four

**At Columbus, Ohio
National Semifinals
Friday, March 30**
Mississippi State (36-1) vs. Louisville (36-2) **AP Sports:** 1 a.m. Saturday CET 8 a.m. Saturday JKT
UConn (36-0) vs. Notre Dame (33-3) **AP Sports:** 3:30 a.m. Saturday CET 10:30 a.m. Saturday JKT
**National Championship
Sunday, April 1**
Semifinal winners **AP Sports:** Mid-night Sunday CET 7 a.m. Monday JKT

half of Notre Dame's second-round game with Villanova, which was tied 45-45 at halftime. But she came out and played 16 minutes, scoring two points and pulling down six rebounds as the Irish ran away for a 98-72 victory. Then at Spokane, Westbeld had four points, six rebounds and three assists in a 90-84 Elite Eight victory over Texas A&M.

Now she's helped the Irish get back to the Final Four for the first time in a few years.

Their next opponent is a familiar one in UConn. The Irish-Huskies semifinal follows another matching No. 1 seeds: Kansas City winner Mississippi State (36-1) and Lexington winner Louisville (36-2). The winners meet Easter Sunday.

Two of Notre Dame's losses came at the hands of the Cardinals — 100-67 on Jan. 11 in Louisville and then 74-72 March 4 in the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament championship game

in Greensboro, N.C.

The other was an 80-71 setback Dec. 3 in Hartford's XL Center to Geno Auriemma's crew. The Irish, then No. 2, led that one by 11 points early in the fourth quarter, but the top-ranked Huskies finished on a 26-6 run for an 80-71 victory in which Westbeld, still rounding herself into shape from offseason right ankle surgery, scored four points.

That was the seventh straight victory by UConn over Notre Dame, a string that includes three Irish losses in the Final Four, including two in the 2014 and '15 championship games, the last one a 63-53 setback in Tampa, Fla., during Westbeld's freshman season.

She and the Irish haven't been back to the Final Four since.

"I wanted it so badly," Westbeld said. "I'm really happy we were able to accomplish that. I'm excited for my teammates. Everyone has done so much for us to get to this point. I'm just proud of the way we won. We've turned some heads — I don't think anyone thought we could get this far."

The Irish have overcome four season-ending ACL injuries and other injuries — a black eye to Westbeld, a broken nose for guard Jackie Young and a hand injury to guard Marina Mabrey even before the tournament run began with Westbeld suffering a left ankle sprain early in the first minutes of Notre Dame's 99-81 first-round victory over Cal State Northridge.

Second chance? Not for majority of black coaches

By DOUG FEINBERG
Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Buffalo coach Felisha Legette-Jack was thankful for the second chance.

Most black women's basketball coaches don't get that opportunity.

"I have some really amazing colleagues that look like me," she said after her team lost to South Carolina in the Albany Region semifinals. "I have so many friends that had an opportunity and they lose their opportunities and never will be coming back up at all."

The 51-year-old Legette-Jack led the Bulls to the Sweet 16 as an 11 seed. She got the top job at the school after she was let go by Indiana.

"It took an African-American woman to notice me when I lost my job at Indiana," Legette-Jack said. "Had she not noticed me, Danny White would have never known about me; and because she spoke to him and I was able to present myself to him, I was able to get this opportunity to bring this — from where it was to where it is now."

It often doesn't get this far. According to the most recent Diversity and Ethics in Sport report on college athletics by Richard Lapchick, only 11.4 percent of head coaches for women's hoops were African-American women in 2016-17. That's 37 of the 315 jobs.

Only of a few of those coaches got a second chance after they were let go from their first job.

"They are not getting very many opportunities and it's not usual for an African-American woman to get a second chance let alone a first chance," Lapchick said. "Too often what's happened with African-American head coaches

is if they aren't successful in the first two or three years they get a shorter period to (succeed) in. It's problematic for sure."

Legette-Jack and Dawn Staley were two of only six black female head coaches in the NCAA Tournament this year. None are in the Final Four.

Staley became the second black coach to win a women's national championship when she guided South Carolina to the title last year.

"I hope my success is a beacon of hope for other black coaches and also a beacon of hope to other ADs to see that given an opportunity, you can win a national championship," she said.

While head coaching numbers have been consistent over the last decade, there are more African-American assistants than 10 years ago, rising from 14.2 percent in 2007-08 to 29.5 percent last year.

Jollette Law got a chance at Illinois after working as an assistant at Rutgers under C. Vivian Stringer. Law went 69-93 in her five years at Illinois before being fired. She has bounced around as an assistant since then, at Tennessee and now South Carolina.

She doesn't know if she will get another chance as a head coach despite being one of the most well-respected assistants in the sport.

"You get calls but it's not for the BCS jobs. They are looking elsewhere or for the next up-and-coming assistant coaches. Sometimes it is disheartening," Law told The Associated Press. "You sit back and think I'm not the first person they are calling. They are looking at what you did as a previous head coach and not taking into account what you can do for a program."



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Buffalo head coach Felisha Legette-Jack almost didn't get a second chance at a Division I program after being fired by Indiana.

FINAL FOUR

Loyola-Chicago hoops is in a heavenly place

Sister Jean's presence boosts miraculous Ramblers

By **EDDIE PELLIS**
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — On the night before Easter, a night when Sister Jean could reasonably be contemplating more consequential affairs, she will instead be festooned in her maroon and yellow letter jacket, sitting in her wheelchair on the floor of one of America's greatest sports cathedrals, praying for an entirely different sort of miracle. She'll be trying to will the underdog, 11th-seeded Ramblers from the Jesuit school of Loyola-Chicago another step along the road to a national championship. It's a road even the most pious fan wouldn't have dreamed of a mere three weeks ago.

More than any single player or coach, it is the 98-year-old nun, Sister Jean Dolores-Schmidt, who has left an indelible mark on this year's NCAA Tournament, with her scouting reports and T-shirt-ready advice — "Worship, work and wisdom" — lending an almost otherworldly credence to the idea that, in sports, anything is possible.

And for those seeking a deeper meaning to Loyola's improbable trip to the Final Four, her presence raises questions that would normally be out of bounds in most mainstream sports conversations:

Do Sister Jean's prayers carry more weight than, say, those of the Michigan fans who will be rooting against Loyola on Saturday?

Is it OK to pray for something as pedestrian as, say, your team to win the big game?

Do miracles really happen in sports? To sum them all up: Does God really care about basketball?

"Because God cares about the whole health of a human being, and because play is an element of the human experience, God cares about play," says Joe Price, an ordained minister who teaches classes on sports and religion at Whittier College. "Now, whether God cares about competitive sport at a professional level is perhaps a different question."

Big-time sports has been long familiar with enthusiastically religious athletes and ultra-successful programs from religious colleges. Tim Tebow, Carson Wentz and Kurt Warner, Notre Dame, BYU and, yes, another Final Four participant this weekend, Villanova. They and others have come to the fore and brought their religion with them, front and center.

And yet, Loyola feels like something different. Instead of a player or coach who stands out as the main catalyst for all this success, it's a nun who is not only bringing added attention to her beloved players, but doing it in a way that unravels stereotypes about the elderly to say nothing of the millions of women who have chosen her calling over the centuries.

It begs the question of whether Sister Jean's prayers hold any more weight than those of others, including secular fans who may want Kansas or Michigan to win on Saturday — to say nothing of the poor folks who were pulling for Kansas State or Texas Tech last weekend in the Elite Eight.

The idea of divine intervention in sports goes way back, even decades before Al Michaels famously asked "Do you believe in miracles?" as the seconds ticked down in the 1980 U.S. Olympic hockey team's seminal victory over the Russians — a bunch of amateurs beating a bunch of professionals.

And yet, the so-called "Miracle on Ice" hardly stands alone in sports, where the never-ending search for the upset, the unexpected, the unexplainable, is, in fact, "the reason we play the game."

Miracle in the Meadowlands.

Music City Miracle.

The Immaculate Reception.

Hail Mary.

The winner of the first three women's national titles: Immaculate College. That was no miracle.

But if little Loyola-Chicago is cutting down nets come Monday night, well, that might be — even if God is in no way connected to the actual result.



TYLER LA RIVIERE, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES/AP

Sister Jean Dolores-Schmidt, the Loyola Ramblers chaplain, celebrates with fans inside the Gentile Arena on Sunday in Chicago.

Scoreboard

NCAA Tournament

EAST REGIONAL

Regional Championship

Sunday, March 25

Villanova 71, Texas Tech 59

SOUTH REGIONAL

Regional Championship

Saturday, March 24

Loyola of Chicago 78, Kansas State 62

MIDWEST REGIONAL

Regional Championship

Sunday, March 25

Kansas 85, Duke 81 (OT)

WEST REGIONAL

Regional Championship

Saturday, March 24

Michigan 58, Florida State 54

FINAL FOUR

At The Alamodome

San Antonio

National Semifinals

Saturday, March 31

Loyola of Chicago (32-5), vs. Michigan (24-11), **APN Sports**: 12 a.m. Sunday CET, 7 a.m. Sunday JKT

Villanova (34-4), vs. Kansas (31-7), **APN Sports**: 2:30 a.m. Sunday CET, 9:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

National Championship

Monday, April 2

Semifinal winners, **APN Sports**: 3 a.m. Tuesday CET, 10 a.m. Sunday JKT

Believe: Anything can happen in NCAA Tournament

FROM BACK PAGE

Saturday, one side of the bracket — East versus Midwest — will represent the status quo. Villanova looks like the team to beat if only because the Wildcats, in the Final Four for the second time in three seasons, have found a variety of ways to win.

After racing through much of the tournament with offensive punch, Villanova made only 33 percent of its shots — and about 17 percent of its threes — against Texas Tech on Sunday.

The Wildcats' 71-59 win had everything to do with defense and free throws.

"We played a really tough basketball team that had us scouted extremely well, took away our three, really took away our ability to play tough and ugly," coach Jay Wright said.

They now face a Kansas squad that defeated Duke, 85-81, in a battle of blue bloods that stretched into overtime, the Jayhawks advancing beyond their region after near-misses the past two seasons.

Their matchup at the Alamodome pits two of the nation's top players — Villanova junior Jalen Brunson versus Kansas senior Devonte Graham — in a game that will send one team

to the final as a clear favorite.

Kansas coach Bill Self said he was "happy for these guys because they deserve to experience what the best of college basketball is, and that will be what takes place Saturday and Monday."

The other side of the bracket — West versus South — is more unorthodox, thanks to a string of upsets that left countless office pools in tatters.

Though Michigan is a reasonably high seed, the Wolverines spent much of the season looking ordinary. Turning things around after a February loss at Northwestern, they have forged a 13-game winning streak on equal parts hope and grit.

That type of effort was essential in the West final against a Florida State team that deploys wave upon wave of bench players, hoping to exhaust opponents.

"We understood we can't control if shots go in or not, but we've got to control our energy and effort," sophomore Charles Matthews said. "And we did that on the defensive end."

If there has been anything traditional about this tournament, it has been the notion that defense wins championships.

Even after Virginia — surrendering a national-best 53.4 points a game — lost a first-round shocker to Maryland Baltimore County, becoming the first top seed to fall to a No. 16 in NCAA history, the idea of shutting down opponents remained a popular theme.

Villanova and Michigan weren't the only teams crediting defense for their regional wins. Loyola Chicago, which shot a healthy 57 percent in the South final, talked about limiting Kansas State to 35 percent.

"Our defense dictates everything," coach Porter Moser said.

If nothing else, the allure of the underdog should make the Ramblers, winners of 14 games in a row, a fan favorite in San Antonio.

Only three other 11th seeds have made the Final Four; none has made it to the championship game. So the Wolverines understand that much of the nation is rooting for this unusual tournament to produce a fittingly quirky end.

They also appreciate that anything can happen.

"I don't think any of us cares about rankings, seedings or none of that," forward Moritz Wagner said. "It's about who is going to play better."

FINAL FOUR

Unlikely bunch put Jayhawks back in semis

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

LAWRENCE, Kan. — In the six years since Kansas last made the Final Four, coach Bill Self has produced eight NBA Draft picks. Six were first-round selections, one was national player of the year and another was the No. 1 overall pick. You could argue all of those teams were more talented than this one.

Yet they all stumbled where this year's team succeeded, falling shy of the final weekend of the NCAA Tournament. The teams led by Andrew Wiggins and Kelly Oubre didn't even survive the first weekend, and last year's group headlined by Frank Mason III and Josh Jackson was bumped in the Elite Eight.

Perhaps that is why Self, as fiery as you'll find during a game but relatively composed everywhere else, was so emotional after the Jayhawks beat Duke in overtime to secure their spot in San Antonio.

"Of all the teams we've had," he said during a conference call Monday, "this may be the one I wouldn't expect to do this, and for me to obviously be on these guys pretty hard for things that are shortcomings — basically their personality traits — and to see the reason we won is they 100 percent flipped those, that gives a coach a lot of pride."

Indeed, this group of Jayhawks overcame its share of adversity on the way to winning a record-setting 14th consecutive Big 12 title, the conference tournament and the Midwest Regional.

The first week of the season, Kansas released five-star recruit Billy Preston would be unable to play while the school investigated the ownership of his vehicle. He ultimately decided to turn pro and head to Europe, never once stepping on the floor for a game that counted.

They lost three games at Allen Fieldhouse, more than they usually do in three seasons combined. They were thumped by



CHARLIE NEUBERG/AP

Kansas' Devonte' Graham, center, holds the trophy after defeating Duke in the Midwest Regional final. Far more talented Jayhawks teams in the past failed to advance as far in the NCAA Tournament as this year's group, led by senior Graham.

Washington and Arizona State in games that revealed their many flaws.

When the Big 12 Tournament rolled around, Udoka Azubuike sprained a ligament in his left knee to render him a 7-foot, 280-pound cheerleader. He barely played in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, but has come up big in wins over Seton Hall, Clemson and the Blue Devils.

"It's just a great feeling for us, for the fans, just everything that we've been through this year, all the ups and downs," senior guard Devonte Graham said. "Everything that we've been through, we do it for moments like this. It's just special."

Especially after coming oh-so-close the past two seasons.

The Jayhawks rolled to the regional finals in 2016 before running into red-hot Michigan, which is likewise headed to San Antonio. And last year they romped through their region before losing to Oregon in Kansas City, their home away from home, a defeat that ended the college careers of Mason and Jackson and left a bitter taste.

That loss was a big reason Graham returned for his senior season. The same for Svi Mykhailiuk, who briefly considered the draft before deciding to come back for one last shot at glory.

Both have been crucial during the NAAs, but perhaps nobody has risen to the occasion like Malik Newman, the trans-

fer from Mississippi State who dropped 32 points on Duke.

He was expected to do big things coming out of high school, but things didn't pan out with the Bulldogs. So he transferred to Kansas and sat out a year, practicing with the scout team and waiting for his chance, only to spend most of this season with Self roaring into his ears.

He struggled on defense. He wasn't assertive on offense. He settled for poor shots and didn't do enough to take the pressure off Graham, which in turn ruined the offensive flow.

But much as the Jayhawks got hot when it mattered, so did Newman. He was voted the MVP of the Big 12 Tournament before keeping his exceptional March going. He scored 28 against Seton Hall, 17 against Clemson and scored all 13 of the Jayhawks' overtime points against the Blue Devils.

"These guys, they've been here plenty of times. And like Coach always said at the beginning of the year, they've been knocking on the door," Newman said. "That's basically what we was playing for, to help these guys get over that hump. I'm just glad that I was able to contribute in a good way to help."

Now, the Jayhawks have their sights set on Villanova, the team that beat them one step shy of the Final Four two years ago. Win that matchup of No. 1 seeds and they'll be back in the title game for the first time since 2012, and on the doorstep of their first title in a decade.

One that happened to have been won in San Antonio.

"This is a team that's gotten hot at the right time. It's a group that's been inconsistent, that had its share of doubters," Self said, "including myself at certain times of the year. But there's no doubt that right now, they're playing their best ball."

Beilein remains humble amid colleagues' praise

By NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — John Beilein has been a college basketball coach for four decades, so by this point, his peers have a good idea what to expect.

His strategy may change and evolve — this year, Beilein's Michigan team is noticeably better on defense — but the values and culture of his program remain consistent.

"When you're a head coach all those years, you watch every program he builds," Villanova coach Jay Wright said, "and are just impressed with the same character, class, dignity at each school."

After a season clouded by an FBI probe — when college basketball problems seemed to be approaching a tipping point — get ready for a feel-good Final Four of sorts. Especially in Saturday night's first semifinal, when the captivating underdogs from Loyola-Chicago take on Michigan and Beilein, a man so respected by his fellow coaches that he topped a press-release poll on the topic of following the rules.

That vote — conducted by CBS



ALEX GALLARDO/AP

Michigan coach John Beilein holds up the net after Michigan defeated Florida State 58-54 to advance to the Final Four.

Sports — gave Beilein some good publicity before the season. CBS asked over 100 coaches which high-major coach they believed "does everything by the book and operates completely within the NCAA's rulebook." Beilein fin-

ished first in the poll, and when asked in early October about being such a clean coach, he joked that he does it by showering regularly.

On Monday, after leading Michigan to its second Final Four in six seasons, he remained humble about his good-guy reputation.

"I think I represent hundreds of Division I coaches that are doing things the right way," the 65-year-old Beilein said. "That was not an exact poll, that was a very random poll, but we do everything we can to make sure we follow the very spirit — not just the NCAA rules, the spirit of the rules of the NCAA."

Beilein coached at Canisius and Richmond before reaching the big time with West Virginia and Michigan. His gradual rise stands out in a sport where quick climbs — and quick falls — are fairly common.

He's also been a head coach his whole career, meaning his teams reflect directly on him.

"When someone is a head coach you kind of know who they are and you watch what they do," said Wright, who recalls when he

was an assistant at Rochester and Beilein was the head coach at Le Moyne.

"You watch them at Le Moyne, Canisius, Richmond, West Virginia, Michigan — I hope I didn't forget one of them," added Wright, whose Villanova team faces Kansas in Saturday's other semifinal. "But that's where I started watching him, and you saw the same consistency, quality of character, quality of players he recruits, class of his team on the court, off the court."

Beilein is an intense coach with an eye for detail. His teams play disciplined, unselfish basketball, and he'll pull players early at the slightest sign of foul trouble. But sideline histrionics are a rarity for him, and his modesty is on constant display.

"Actually it never has been the goal to be in the Final Four," he said Monday. "If the goal was to do your best every day and try to mentor and teach every kid and it led to the Final Four, that's great. But it's never been the goal."

The closest Beilein has come to any real controversy at Michigan involved transfer restrictions on

outgoing players, and even then, the school eventually relented. Guard Spike Albrecht was able to go to play for conference rival Purdue.

About a month ago, Albrecht contributed a funny story on Twitter about what a stickler Beilein is for rules: "Coach Beilein wouldn't let me order Tiramisu for dessert on my official visit because it was being battered and I was only 19."

The last time Beilein took Michigan to the Final Four, the Wolverines lost in the title game to Louisville. The NCAA has since ordered Louisville to vacate that 2013 championship in the wake of a sex scandal.

The teams at this year's Final Four will try to avoid that kind of messy legacy, starting with Loyola and Michigan on Saturday.

"Coach Beilein, I've gotten to know him over the years on the road," Loyola coach Porter Moser said. "I remember visiting with him at the Final Four and on the road, and just what a high-class guy in terms of what he does with his program, how he runs his program. Just got a ton of respect for him."

SPORTS



Trust the process

Teams looking to replicate Astros' path must weigh risks » **Page 56**

NCAA TOURNAMENT



WHY NOT US?

All four finalists have reason to believe this is their year

By DAVID WHARTON
Los Angeles Times

Two weeks of mayhem — a tumult of historic upsets, buzzer-beaters and at least one celebrity nun — have brought the NCAA Tournament to a crossroads.
The Final Four in San Antonio this

weekend will feature favorites and underdogs, traditional programs and a brash upstart.

Which begs the question: Will this tournament ultimately revert to form or deliver true madness?

As the coach of surprising contender Loyola Chicago put it: "Why not us?"

In the aftermath of last weekend's regional finals, the oddsmakers apparently can think of a few reasons. They have made third-seeded Michigan an

early favorite over the 11th-seeded Ramblers and figure Villanova should handle Kansas in a more conventional matchup of No. 1 seeds.

But the past two weeks have proved that seedings and pedigree don't necessarily matter.

"Just if you look at the story of teams," Michigan coach John Beilein said, "they just get hot."

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Few 2nd chances for black women coaches » **Page 61**

